

## **SNAP Shutdown State Solution Profile: Virginia**

**Context:** On October 10<sup>th</sup>, USDA alerted states and territories that due to the federal government shutdown, appropriations for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program have lapsed, and November benefits will not be distributed until the government reopens and instructed states and territories to hold file transfers to EBT vendors. On October 24<sup>th</sup>, USDA announced that it would not use federal contingency funds nor reimburse states for costs incurred during the shutdown if state or territories chose to pay benefits with their own resources.

### **Virginia's Solution:**

On Thursday, October 23rd, Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin [declared](#) a State of Emergency to provide emergency food assistance to constituents as federal appropriations for SNAP lapse during the government shutdown.

Under the leadership of Secretary of Health and Human Resources Janet Kelly, the Department of Social Services has been working with their EBT vendor, Conduent, to get emergency state benefits onto existing EBT cards.

The Governor announced the State of Emergency on 10/23, and the Virginia and Conduent teams are confident that they'll meet their implementation deadline of 10/30.

### **Critical Notes:**

- To maximize state flexibility and abide by FNS regulations, Virginia has developed an emergency state effort, called the Virginia Emergency Nutrition Assistance (VENA) effort. It is **not SNAP**: state funds will not be mixed with existing federal funds.
- To mitigate concerns about "double benefits", the concern that a consumer could get a state benefit and the federal government could promptly reopen and allow a consumer to also receive their federal benefit in a short amount of time, the Virginia team has chosen to do a **weekly issuance** of these benefits rather than a monthly issuance. Therefore, if the federal government reopens in the middle of the month, the state can end the effort.
  - Prior to the shutdown, Virginia followed a staggered issuance schedule
- The Virginia team credited their close partnership with their contacts at Conduent, their EBT vendor, to quickly design innovative solutions. Components of this technical solution include factors such as:
  - Arrival of benefits on consumers' existing EBT cards
  - Paying per additional bank account (2), rather than by individual card, which reduces the cost to the state

- Leveraging the framework and infrastructure that was created for Summer EBT, which adapts existing accounts to fit the needs of this emergency effort.
- Establishing a “hierarchy” where federal benefits on the card will be expended before tapping into the state effort
- A 90-day expungement period: if the benefits are not used within three months, the money returns to the state
- Governor Youngkin prioritized a fiscally conservative approach to SNAP administration before the shutdown, and is committed to finding solutions to reduce rates of SNAP fraud.

### **State and Territory Considerations:**

States/territories who create emergency state efforts, like Virginia:

- Are under **no obligation** to provide the full benefit amounts set by SNAP. While some may choose to provide those same benefit amounts, states/territories can determine the amount that is feasible for them.
- **Do not have to follow the traditional benefits issuance schedule** of the SNAP, and **can design** effort administration to best fit their needs, to leverage weekly or staggered issuance schedules to limit financial risk
- Can choose from a myriad of funding sources, including **rainy day dollars, state funds, or philanthropic funds**

State and territory representatives interested in learning more about the VENA program can visit <http://www.dss.virginia.gov> and see the Governor’s 10/28 press conference [here](#).