

**For Immediate Release**

Contact: *United Way of West Florida*

Lauren Clark, Vice President of Philanthropy and Communications

850.723.0741 / [lauren.clark@uwwf.org](mailto:lauren.clark@uwwf.org)

**60,000 Escambia, Santa Rosa residents rely on SNAP. Nonprofits can't meet the gap alone.**

Pensacola, FL – November 18, 2025

**Op-Ed**

Every day, health and human service non-profits provide essential support to local households, including food, shelter, healthcare, and more. These services are funded by donations from individuals and businesses, corporate and foundation grants, and state and governmental funding. This array of funding supports direct services and agency operations.

Non-profits fill the gaps when other services are unavailable or unaffordable. However, these organizations do not have the financial resources to provide the full range of assistance necessary to meet all a household's needs. That requires a variety of resources, including jobs, private benefits, public benefits, and government-funded programs. When some or all of those cease to exist, it strains the safety net supported by the non-profit sector.

When communities shut down because of COVID, people lost jobs, and the non-profit safety net kicked in. Households received assistance from non-profits, which had enough funds and resources for a while. As the pandemic continued, the federal government provided important funding, which many non-profits used to provide food, rent, utilities, and other assistance to households in need.

A major source of support for households in our area, SNAP, was temporarily without funding due to the government shutdown. SNAP, or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, provides food benefits to low-income families to help with their grocery budgets. This helps ensure people can afford nutritious food that is necessary for them to lead healthy lives.

As of this week, SNAP funding and eligibility remains unclear. Proposed changes suggest that many Americans may lose SNAP benefits entirely as they return. Even those who continue to receive SNAP benefits face financial hardships as they have dipped into other limited funds to pay for food in the past weeks.

U.S. Citizens, or individuals with qualified non-citizen status, are eligible for SNAP. Undocumented immigrants cannot qualify for SNAP. Other requirements vary from state to state.

In Florida, households must earn less than or equal to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level which is \$64,300 for a family of four. These ALICE, Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed, families are working yet living paycheck to paycheck. People over 60 must meet income and asset tests to qualify. Thirty-seven percent of individuals receiving SNAP are in working families. Individuals who are blind or are on federal disability are also eligible for SNAP.

In the United States, nearly 42 million people, or 12% of the population, participate in SNAP. In the state of Florida, 2.98 million people, or 12.7% of the population, receive SNAP benefits. Of those, 1.1 million are children, which represents 39% of all SNAP recipients in Florida.

Forty percent of older adults in Florida are on SNAP. About 30% rely on other programs to have enough to eat, which means that in some cases, multiple services are not enough to feed seniors.

Across the country, National Guard, reservists, military families, and veterans benefit from the SNAP program. In the state of Florida, 108,000 veterans, or 7% of veterans, are SNAP recipients. Locally, in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties, 60,000 individuals rely on SNAP.

The dollar amount of the benefit depends on the state of residence. In Florida, the average SNAP benefit per household member per month is just \$186, or \$6.12 per day. That's not a lot, but it means households are closer to having enough to eat.

Loss of SNAP is not detrimental to just the individuals who rely on it, but to communities as well. Every \$1 in SNAP benefits generates \$1.50 in economic output. SNAP recipients spend their benefits quickly, boosting sales for grocery stores and their suppliers, which in turn supports jobs and wages, directly stimulating the local economy.

The loss of SNAP benefits, in the middle of a government shutdown, is causing tremendous strain on households. That strain is also being felt by the local non-profits, who are committed to helping people. Non-profits are designed to provide support and a safety net when needed, but they are not built to meet all the needs of struggling households. Communities thrive when local, state and federal governments, businesses, foundations, and non-profits work together to provide support to households in need. The absence of one or more of these creates a gap that jeopardizes the health and well-being of hardworking citizens, vulnerable children and adults, and members of our military and veterans.

The non-profit sector in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties works hard to keep families safe and healthy, but we cannot do it alone. You can help your favorite non-profit, or the non-profit sector, by making a financial gift, volunteering your time, and/or advocating for policies that support struggling families in our communities. In turn, you are bringing hope to our friends and neighbors.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Laura Gilliam, United Way of West Florida  
Katie Ballard, Studer Community Institute  
Connie Bookman, Pathways for Change  
Shirley Cornett, Interfaith Ministries  
Rev. Ashlee Mosley Brown, Bright Bridge Ministries  
Rachelle Burns, EscaRosa Suicide Prevention Coalition  
Karen Egozi, Epilepsy Alliance Florida  
Cheryl Etheridge, The Black NonProfit Group  
Carolyn Grawi, Center for Independent Living of Northwest Florida  
Christeia Hawkins, Northwest Florida Community Outreach  
Rachel Iverson, Gulf Coast Freedom Schools  
Josh Newby, Council on Aging of West Florida  
Gladys Scott, Sisters of Hope  
Paula Shell, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwest Florida  
DeDe Flounlaker, Manna Food Bank

###

### **About United Way of West Florida**

United Way of West Florida (UWWF) mobilizes communities to action so all can thrive in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties. True to its founding spirit, whenever there is a need in our communities, UWWF is there. The nonprofit organization brings a comprehensive approach to every challenge, actively listening and responding to local needs. From strengthening local resilience to advancing health, youth opportunity, and financial security, UWWF works towards a future where every person in the community can reach their full potential. To learn more, visit [uwwf.org](http://uwwf.org).