

# A Government Shutdown Will Increase Food Insecurity

Each month, millions of people trust that **federal nutrition programs** will be there to help them through tough times—a government shutdown threatens benefits in these programs and harms individuals and families experiencing food insecurity. Additionally, a shutdown could have a devastating impact on millions of **civilian and military federal employees and federal contractors**. If these workers miss paychecks, it could jeopardize their ability to put food on the table for themselves and their families and cover other household expenses. During previous shutdowns, **food banks** across the country saw large spikes in demand for emergency food assistance, with many people seeking help for the first time.

**The Virginia Peninsula Foodbank urges Congress to reach an agreement to pass fiscal year 2026 appropriations legislation or a continuing resolution that provides full funding for nutrition programs.**

## How will a shutdown affect federal nutrition programs?

A shutdown jeopardizes vital federal nutrition programs, potentially leaving individuals and families in your district and across the country with delayed, reduced or even zero benefits.

- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP):** A shutdown has the potential to disrupt SNAP benefits for families if there is a lack of funding, a delay in processing benefits, or both. As food prices remain high, confusion around SNAP benefit timing or the sudden loss of this grocery purchasing support would jeopardize food access for roughly 42 million people who receive support from SNAP.
- **USDA commodity food purchases and administrative funds:** During a shutdown, families lose access to essential food from the USDA. Food banks cannot place new food orders through The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) or the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), and TEFAP storage and distribution funds for fiscal year 2026 will be delayed. This slows the order and delivery of USDA foods, impacting families who need them and the farmers who sell them to USDA. Additionally, food deliveries and administrative funds for the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) could be disrupted. During previous shutdowns, FDPIR sites facing funding gaps were forced to furlough workers, which had a cascading impact that interrupted food deliveries and distributions to individuals and families.
- **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC):** The WIC program currently serves nearly 6.9 million pregnant and postpartum women, infants and children. A shutdown that disrupts nutrition benefits and other WIC services would put young children at risk of hunger during a time of critical developmental importance.

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- **Child nutrition programs:** A prolonged shutdown threatens the timing of funding reimbursements and general support for child nutrition programs, including school breakfast and lunch as well as afterschool meals provided through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), due to the impact of federal workers being furloughed.

### **How will a shutdown affect individuals and families?**

During a government shutdown, civilian and military federal employees and federal contractors will suddenly face impossible choices—not knowing if paychecks or food benefits will come on time. Food banks will be the first, and potentially only, option for assistance for millions of people whose paychecks or federal benefits do not arrive as expected in October.

In an area like Hampton Roads that heavily relies on federal funding and employment, with tens of thousands of people who are active-duty military or federal employees in our communities, a prolonged shutdown could increase the number of people that the Virginia Peninsula Foodbank already serves. On the greater peninsula, 70,000 individuals experience food insecurity, already up from 60,000 people last year. That's 1 in 8 people in our communities who don't always have guaranteed access to safe, healthy, and nourishing food to eat.

### **How will a shutdown affect food banks?**

At a time when food insecurity remains high and families are turning to food banks in greater numbers, food banks are working to meet sustained demand while navigating serious challenges—from increased food and transportation costs to significant decreases in USDA foods. A Feeding America survey found that around 65% of responding food banks reported seeing demand for food assistance increase or stay the same in June 2025 compared to May 2025. A shutdown will likely lead to an even greater demand for food assistance.

#### **Impact of the 2018 Government Shutdown**

The partial government shutdown in 2018 lasted 35 days. All federal employees who missed paychecks were eventually repaid, but federal contractors were not. Over a million contractors lost more than 10% of their annual income during this shutdown.

The timeline for loading SNAP benefits onto EBT cards was disrupted for the first time in history for all 40 million participants, creating mass confusion and challenges to family budgeting.

Contact Virginia Peninsula Foodbank at (757) 596-7188 or visit [hrfoodbank.org](http://hrfoodbank.org) to receive to receive emergency food assistance, find a local food pantry close to your neighborhood, or make an appointment at the Foodbank's Community Pantry.

