

# USU Extension Food \$ense Program Could Help Families Affected by the Government Shutdown

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02/01/2019

February 1, 2019

## USU EXTENSION FOOD \$ENSE PROGRAM COULD HELP UTAH FAMILIES AFFECTED BY THE GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

Utah State University Extension Food \$ense SNAP-Ed, a research-based program meant to help recipients of food stamps and other low-income Utahns prepare affordable and healthy meals, can be an important resource after the longest government shutdown in



American history.

Due to the government shutdown at the beginning of this year, eligible individuals and households received their February 2019 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (also known as food stamps) early.

“The concern we’re having is that SNAP recipients will need to budget their benefits so that they last until at least early or mid-March,” said LaCee Jiménez, eligibility coordinator for Food \$ense SNAP-Ed. “We’re worried that people will treat the early payment like extra benefits, or will be confused by the changed schedule and they’ll run out of funds.”

There’s also a concern for the families of federal employees who are forced to adjust their budgets due to missed paychecks.

“For those whose ability to eat has been affected by the partial government shutdown, Food \$ense SNAP-Ed has resources to help you,” Jiménez said. “Not only do we want everyone to have access to food, but we want everyone to have access to nourishing foods.”

The Food \$ense SNAP-Ed program offers free, hands-on classes throughout the state to help individuals and families learn how to make nutritious and delicious meals with ingredients they already have on hand. Participants also learn meal planning and shopping techniques that will help them stretch their food budget, food safety habits and strategies for being active with limited resources.

“One of the best ways to access our materials is by going to our website,” said Heidi LeBlanc, Food \$ense SNAP-Ed director. “Using that website as a starting point, you can find links to our blogs and social media sites. You can also find recipes and information if there are classes in your area. These resources have helped many eat better while stretching food dollars or cooking with what is on hand.” For more information about Food \$ense resources and classes near you, visit [CreateBetterHealth.usu.edu](http://CreateBetterHealth.usu.edu).

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