

# Food crisis in Indianapolis as SNAP benefits are reduced by 35 percent statewide

**Kevin Reed**  
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The cutoff and reduction of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits in Indiana, particularly in Indianapolis, is part of the escalation of the social crisis across America triggered by the federal government shutdown and the refusal of the Trump administration to take emergency action to keep tens of millions of the most vulnerable people on the program.

More than 42 million people, including over 570,000 residents of Indiana, lost access to their November SNAP payments as the shutdown continued. The Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) announced that monthly benefit allotments for November would be slashed by 35 percent, rather than the initially projected 50 percent, and disbursements would be delayed by at least a week, intensifying food insecurity throughout the state.

Indiana's SNAP crisis is especially acute in Indianapolis, where a significant portion of the population—about 150,000 in central Indiana—depend on food assistance programs for basic nutrition. Statewide, current figures indicate 274,000 households receive SNAP, with more than half being families with children.

Some families have now received 65 percent of their expected monthly benefit, a fact confirmed by the governor's office and by local organizations wrestling with an unprecedented surge in demand.

Long before the SNAP program was disrupted by the shutdown, food insecurity in Indiana was at record highs. A recent survey from the Indy Hunger Network found that over half of central Indiana households experienced food insecurity during the year preceding the benefits cut, with 37 percent missing meals due to lack of food.

In Marion County, where Indianapolis is located, food need had already soared to about 30 percent, exceeding the numbers during the height of the pandemic, with an estimated 94 million meals missed annually across the state. Hunger and poor nutrition are prevalent, with rural counties reporting food insecurity at rates comparable to urban areas.

Rural residents, especially families with children, consistently face higher hunger and nutritional risks,

compounded by barriers such as distance from food sources and limited access to charitable aid.

In response to the food emergency, nonprofit food banks and charities have raced to fill the gap. The city of Gary launched a \$275,000 relief plan, combining municipal, corporate and philanthropic funds to support emergency food distribution, particularly through the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana.

Indianapolis city officials, partnering with Gleaners Food Bank, have pledged \$200,000 in emergency funding and organized free food distribution events, including direct outreach across schools and parks. Clearly, these efforts fall far short of the need since SNAP provides roughly half of the meals for those seeking food assistance in Marion County, and local pantries and banks cannot fully compensate for the loss of these federal benefits.

The crisis in Indianapolis can be vividly seen at the Westminster Neighborhood Services Food Pantry on the city's Near Eastside. The pantry, open three days a week, offers both food assistance and a soup kitchen to families in desperate need. For the past two weeks, lines of people seeking aid have stretched around the block even as temperatures have been well below freezing, especially in the early morning hours.

Staff and volunteers report surging lines and panicked families, many of whom have not received their expected SNAP benefits. Westminster's mission of providing access to basic needs and community support is under acute stress, with volunteers mobilized daily to respond to emergency requests and management urging community donations and involvement.

Westminster management has emphasized the importance of solidarity, noting, "Through these acts of generosity and solidarity, we can make a meaningful impact on our community," while also warning that "no services will be denied based on faith tradition" in an effort to reach everyone in need.

Westminster's team and longtime volunteers have spoken of the importance of financial donations and volunteering,

noting that these contributions are “crucial” for keeping pantry shelves stocked and sustaining essential programs during surges in demand.

The SNAP cutoffs have had profound effects on families and children. As documented in the *Mirror Indy*, Richelle Williams, an Indianapolis resident and mother of three, described her family’s struggle as they went a week without their SNAP benefits. “It should not be so hard to live,” Williams said, detailing sleepless nights spent calculating bills, stretching meals, canceling gymnastics lessons and forgoing outings—all in an effort to feed her children.

The anxiety and uncertainty, exacerbated by constantly changing government guidance, left Richelle feeling overwhelmed: “I’m over it. Too many families are suffering.” Williams’ case is one example of the crisis facing thousands of Indianapolis families now forced to rely on charitable food distributions to supplement the SNAP support.

The shutdown of SNAP is the latest of the US government’s assault on the most vulnerable. The Trump administration has refused to take emergency steps to continue the funding, even defying federal court orders mandating the release of emergency aid to families in crisis. A judge warned this policy would instantly put 16 million children at risk of hunger, but the White House used mass deprivation as a bargaining chip to press its political agenda and erect measures of repression.

As in Indiana, emergency funding from contingency sources across the country covered only a fraction of the program’s need. Meanwhile, new federal eligibility restrictions—set to begin next month—will further shrink the rolls and devastate working class households.

The Trump administration, with support from the Democratic Party, has allocated massive sums for military expenditures and preparations for the deployment of a naval, air and Marine forces in the Caribbean, which exposes the priorities of the ruling financial oligarchy.

While Republican officials in Indiana blocked proposals to allocate state surplus funds to backfill the federal SNAP cuts, the Democratic Party has refused to do anything to mobilize the mass opposition that exists to the attacks by the fascists in the White House and the Indiana State House against the working class and poor.

The Democratic Party has appealed for bipartisan collaboration with Trump, and this has served to legitimize the withholding support for the basic needs of millions. The Democrats’ feigned opposition to Trump is aimed at diverting the necessary mass confrontation with Wall Street’s billionaires and their drive for austerity and enrichment of themselves at the expense of the majority.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has documented, the

SNAP cutoff is part of a deliberate strategy of using hunger as a weapon of class rule. The social deprivation imposed through the cutoff of benefits exposes the criminality of the capitalist system and both parties’ efforts to sacrifice workers and children to the wealth accumulation of a handful of parasites at the top of capitalist pyramid.

Like the undemocratic assault on the rights of immigrant workers, the goal of the attack on the most vulnerable in society is part of a two-pronged strategy to, first, roll back the gains of the entire working class over the past century and, second, use the armed police state apparatus to intimidate and repress any opposition that emerges to the social counterrevolution.

In the days and weeks ahead, as new cutbacks are implemented, thousands of households in Indiana and across the US will face the necessity of taking up a political struggle against the capitalist power structure that is responsible for this social catastrophe. Only a mass movement of the working class as a whole, unified across racial and national lines, politically independent of both capitalist parties and based on socialist program can fight for the right to food, housing, jobs, good working conditions and living standards, healthcare, education and all the fundamental necessities of life.

We urge readers to attend the public meeting in Indianapolis to hear about the program of the Socialist Equality Party and to take up this fight.

*After the “No Kings” protests and the November 4 election:*

A Socialist Strategy to Stop Trump’s Dictatorship

Monday, November 17

6:30pm

Indianapolis Public Library

Spades Park Branch

Community Meeting Room - 2nd Floor

1801 Nowland Avenue

Indianapolis, IN 46201



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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