

Massachusetts Law Reform Institute

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To: Pat Baker and Members, Food SNAP Improvement Coalition

From: Risa Waldoks, Summer Intern

Date: July 20, 2010

RE: **Avenues for Social Networking and Outreach to Low Income Massachusetts Community College Students about Food Stamp/SNAP Benefits**

Attached to this memo are possible avenues for SNAP outreach at each of the fifteen Massachusetts community colleges. Based on recent DTA guidance (Field Ops Memo 2010-28, <http://www.masslegalservices.org/system/files/2010-28.pdf>), students identified by community colleges as enrolled in a career or technical education program that will lead to employment may be eligible for SNAP benefits. For resources regarding SNAP eligibility for college students, see: <http://www.masslegalservices.org/food4students>. I have explored each of the school's websites and compiled a list of mediums through which information is disseminated to the student body.

The list for each community college, with available contact information, is organized as follows:

- **News sections on homepages of school websites:** Though procedures differ from school to school, one should generally contact either the webmaster or the marketing departments to inquire about posting links or press releases on the school websites.
- **Available Facebook and Twitter pages:** In order to track the use of information, it is best to post on a single website and share links to that website, as opposed to directly posting information on social media pages. To post a message and share a link on a school's Facebook page wall, one must first "like" the page. Alternatively, one could contact either an IT or communications specialist at the school to find out who administers the page and ask them to post the message from the school's account. For Twitter, one could use an already existing account to mention specific schools (by typing @name) and track the message's effectiveness by including the hashtag "food4students" at the message's end. One could also use "Bit.ly," a service that shortens links and allows one to track when someone posts them on the web. This example tweet to Berkshire Community College uses the shortened link to SNAP resources for community college students on MassLegalServices.org: "2,000 @berkshirecc students may be eligible for food stamps <http://bit.ly/ca0yL5> #food4students." One could then track how many of these messages are being shared by going to <http://search.twitter.com> and typing #food4students in the search box.
- **Financial aid offices and programs directed at low-income students:** The offices of financial aid can be vital in distributing SNAP resources and posting messages and links on their websites. One should contact the financial aid offices at each school to inquire about

outreach. Contact information for other programs that provide support services for low-income students, such as the TRIO programs, is also included with this list.

- **College publications, school newspapers, and radio stations:** Many schools' Marketing and Publication Departments produce newsletters and catalogues that may be useful for outreach. One should contact the specific school's departments to learn about the publication process. Many of the community colleges also have student-run newspapers and radio stations, which are run either by Marketing and Publications or are considered clubs and managed by the departments of student life.
- **Student Clubs and Offices of Student Life:** Student Government Associations, Campus Activities Boards, student interest groups, and other student clubs could also be important outreach tools. One should generally contact Offices of Student Life or Student Activities to learn more about them and how they may be useful.

Please note: MLRI has not contacted all of these sources. Anti-hunger organizations should be prepared to explain the change in food stamp/SNAP policy when making outreach efforts.

The expansion of SNAP eligibly to community college students is very exciting. With good outreach, low-income students can access nutritious resources to help them successfully complete their education. For additional materials and talking points on the nutritional importance as well as economic stimulus effect of SNAP benefits, check out USDA and FRAC's SNAP outreach materials available at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm> and http://www.frac.org/html/federal_food_programs/programs/fsoutreachprg.html

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