The Benefit Assisters Coalition is Ready to Partner with VT

July 4, 2025: President Trump signed into law H.R. 1, marking **largest-ever cuts** to **SNAP** and **Medicaid.**

Oct 1, 2025: VT had to implement eligibility changes to **SNAP**.

Oct 1, 2026: VT must pay 75% of cost to administer **SNAP**, a historic and harmful cost increase from the federal government.

Oct 1, 2026: VT must implement changes to immigrant eligibility for **Medicaid**.

Jan 1, 2027: VT must implement work reporting and renewal changes to **Medicaid**.

Oct 1, 2027: VT forced to pay part of SNAP benefits if **payment error rate** is >6% (currently 5.3%)

Impact to Vermonters who afford groceries with SNAP (3SquaresVT)

- Since June 2025 and as of March 2026:
  - 4,547 people in VT have lost their 3SquaresVT benefits
  - 1,544 of these people are **children**

Impact to Vermonters who afford healthcare with Medicaid

- VT Officials estimate that 45,000 people risk losing coverage
  - 400-600 immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers on Oct 1, 2026

-https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snap-tracker-people-are-losing-food-assistance-as-the-republican-megabill
-https://vtdigger.org/2025/07/03/vermont-officials-estimate-45000-people-to-lose-health-insurance-under-trumps-tax-bill/
-https://vtdigger.org/2025/08/04/how-medicaid-cuts-and-federal-policy-changes-will-impact-health-care-access-for-vermonts-noncitizens/

Consequences Across Programs: Categorical Eligibility

"Categorical Eligibility" is when State administrators can use information collected by one public benefit program to help enroll people for other benefits for which they qualify.

Categorical Eligibility helps build efficiencies when enrolling households that qualify for multiple programs.

SNAP and Medicaid are often programs that can share information to support enrollment or help with income-eligibility in other programs. **If people lose access to these programs, they may lose access to others.**

Programs with Categorical Eligibility

SNAP & Medicaid eligibility support enrollment in the following programs:

- Crop Cash at Farmers Markets
- Fuel Assistance, Crisis Fuel, and Weatherization Programs
- Lifeline and Internet Essentials
- Pell Grant
- WIC
- Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP)
- Some Housing Assistance
- Reach Up
- Vermont Parks Forever (free access to VT State Parks)

Local programs also use Medicaid & SNAP enrollment, such as: Everybody Bikes (Old Spokes Home), Energy Discount Programs through VT Gas and Green Mountain Power.

Some States are hiring, allocating resources to respond to the need.

Massachusetts: 80 new SNAP staff positions.

Wisconsin: 32 new SNAP staff positions.

Indiana: 60 new SNAP staff positions, 400 new Medicaid staff positions.

(this is what we can document)

We are in the midst of the largest enrollment decline in decades.

As of May 2026, the VT State Administration did not have a plan to that was focused on helping people keep their benefits by providing individualized assistance.

A Coalition of Community Providers presented a plan to the Vermont Legislature and Administration earlier this year.

The Vermont General Assembly provided funding for trusted SNAP and Medicaid benefit assisters in communities across Vermont.

The proposal from the Benefit Assisters Coalition is a collective statewide effort that will:

- Utilize existing networks efficiently
- Provide support to people, where they already are, by people they already trust
- Ensure people know about and get food & healthcare they're eligible for–maximizing federal dollars
- Help reduce agency burden and support a low payment error rate

Notices about benefits and changes are complex.

Most communications are by mail.

Most communications are in English.

Work reporting rules are confusing.

Access to a district office is limited. Call wait times can be long. Interpretation services are inconsistent.

People will need help.

People already have to complete more paperwork more often, and soon, this paperwork burden will increase.

- ➔ Some households could be getting letters almost weekly because of different timing for household members.
- ➔ Some letters will be for Medicaid and some will be for SNAP.
- ➔ People in these households will have to deal with BOTH benefit programs at the same time.
- ➔ If people have to go to multiple places to get help, that will add to their burden and increase the likelihood that they will lose their benefits.

The organizations represented by this proposal all serve low-income people. VT-211 has committed to screen all callers to determine the need for benefits assistance, and referring appropriately.

People with disabilities

People seeking health care services

People who are employed

10 Statewide Networks

81 Locations

63 Positions

2-1-1 screening every caller for reference

Older Vermonters

People who need mental health services

Survivors of domestic & sexual violence

People experiencing homelessness

Families with young children

Households with mixed-status members (refugees, asylees, immigrants, etc)

VERMONT CARE PARTNERS

VCAP VERMONT COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP

VERMONT Parent Child Center NETWORK

Vermont Aging Network Consortium

VERMONT NETWORK

CONNECTING CULTURES NESTT

SASH® a caring partnership
SUPPORT AND SERVICES AT HOME

UNITED WAY United Ways of Vermont

211 of Vermont

Planned Parenthood® of Northern New England

UNITED WAY Northwest Vermont, Green Mountain, & Lamoille County

WORKING BRIDGES

There is a strong Return on Investment of Benefit Assisters

They are trusted

Info to clients can often reach people more effectively and quickly through trusted, familiar communications channels.

They are experts

They are “plain language” translators and communicate rules and processes in a way that meets people where they’re at.

They are partners

They offer high-quality application assistance, which can improve case accuracy and compliment state processes.

What Benefit Assisters will do

- Commit to having certified trained staff in SNAP **and** Medicaid eligibility, policy, application and benefit maintenance requirements, and anti-stigma messaging and communication strategies

- Commit to talking with their clients about SNAP **and** Medicaid as potentially available programs to support their basic needs – in the case of VT 211, screen every caller for enrollment in SNAP and Medicaid, refer if not enrolled and interested

- Commit to quarterly reporting requirements and deliverables

- **Continue** serving as trusted providers (these organizations **already** help people in their local communities with program access)

Benefit Assisters **are not** the people who determine eligibility or benefits.

Benefit Assisters **are the local, trusted assisters** helping both participants and, in turn, state agencies.

Benefit Assisters are **partners in accuracy.**

Benefit Assisters can help reduce the burden on beneficiaries:

- Demystifying requirements, notices, questions
- Ensuring questions are answered accurately
- Coaching clients on required verification
- Streamlining application materials to reduce state time/burden

SNAP Payment Error Rates

- **Cause of Payment Error:** ~50% caused by client, ~50% caused by state agency

- **#1 Driver: Income** - either client does not know what must be reported, or state worker doesn't input accurate income and/or doesn't follow up on reported information

- Benefit Assisters can help people understand what counts, what must be reported, and when.

<u>This</u> Benefit Assistor Coalition is ready

- They know what the task is at hand
- They are ready to ensure every eligible person remains connected to SNAP & Medicaid
- They are prepared to focus time and energy on this essential effort
- They know what their communities & clients need

This is an “all hands on deck” moment.

The Benefit Assister Coalition is ready to step up .