

RCW 43.70.780 Fruit and vegetable incentives program. (1) The fruit and vegetable incentives program is established to increase fruit and vegetable consumption among food insecure individuals with limited incomes. The fruit and vegetable incentives program includes:

(a) Farmers market basic food incentives to provide eligible participants with extra benefits to purchase fruits and vegetables at authorized farmers markets when the participant uses basic food benefits;

(b) Grocery store basic food incentives to provide eligible participants with extra benefits to purchase fruits and vegetables at authorized grocery stores when the participant uses basic food benefits; and

(c) Fruit and vegetable vouchers provided by a health care provider, health educator, community health worker, or other health professional to an eligible participant for use at an authorized farmers market or grocery store.

(2) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the department shall administer the fruit and vegetable incentives program. As part of its duties, the department shall:

(a) Collaborate with other state agencies whose missions and programs closely align with the fruit and vegetable incentives program, including the department of social and health services and the department of agriculture, in the development and implementation of the program;

(b) Provide resources, coordination, and technical assistance to program partners for targeted outreach to food insecure populations and for administration of the program. Program partners may include farmers markets, grocery stores, government agencies, health care systems, and nonprofit organizations; and

(c) Adopt rules to implement this section.

(3) Farmers market basic food incentives may be provided to eligible participants for use at farmers markets authorized by the department. The incentives are additional funds that may be used to purchase eligible fruits and vegetables as defined by the department. When authorizing a participating farmers market, the department may give preference to a farmers market that accepts or has previously accepted supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits, has the capacity to accept supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits, or is located in a county with a high level of food insecurity, as defined by the department.

(4) Grocery store basic food incentives may be provided to eligible participants for use at a grocery store that is an authorized supplemental nutrition assistance program retailer and approved by the department. The incentives are additional funds that may be used to purchase eligible fruits and vegetables as defined by the department. When approving a participating grocery store, the department may give preference to a store that is located in a county with a high level of food insecurity.

(5) Fruit and vegetable vouchers are cash-value vouchers that may be distributed by a participating health care provider, health educator, community health worker, or other health professional to a patient who is eligible for basic food and has a qualifying health condition, as defined by the department, or is food insecure. The voucher may be redeemed at a participating retailer, including an authorized farmers market or grocery store. The department shall approve participating health care systems and may give preference to

systems that have operated fruit and vegetable prescription programs, routinely screen patients for food insecurity, have a high percentage of patients who are medicaid clients, or are located in a county with a high level of food insecurity.

(6) Subject to the availability of funds, the department must evaluate the fruit and vegetable incentives program effectiveness. When conducting the evaluation, the department must collect information related to fruit and vegetable consumption by eligible participants, levels of food security, and likely impacts on public health outcomes as a result of the program. By July 1, 2021, and in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, the department must submit a progress report to the governor and the legislature describing the results of the program and recommending any legislative or programmatic changes to improve the effectiveness of program delivery. By December 1, 2023, the department must submit a complete program evaluation describing the program's effectiveness and including any additional recommendations for program improvements.

(7) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(a) "Eligible participant" means:

(i) For the purposes of subsection (1)(a) and (b) of this section, a recipient of basic food benefits, including the supplemental nutrition assistance program and the food assistance program, as authorized under Title 74 RCW; or

(ii) For the purposes of subsection (1)(c) of this section, a person who is determined to be food insecure by a participating health care provider.

(b) "Food insecure" means a state in which consistent access to adequate food is limited by a lack of money and other resources at times during the year. [2019 c 168 s 2.]

Findings—Intent—2019 c 168: "(1) The legislature finds that nearly eleven percent of Washington households, including more than two hundred eighty thousand children, are food insecure with limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods. The legislature further finds that food insecurity contributes to poor quality diets; chronic medical conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension; and negative outcomes for children and families, including harmful effects on behavioral health. Further, food insecurity disproportionately affects people with low incomes, people of color, and rural residents.

(2) The legislature finds that food assistance programs such as the special supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children and the supplemental nutrition assistance program are effective in significantly reducing food insecurity; that participants report difficulty affording and accessing healthy foods; and that fruit and vegetable consumption among such food assistance program participants is far below national dietary guidelines.

(3) The legislature finds that the state department of health has successfully managed a food insecurity nutrition incentives grant from the United States department of agriculture that provides a framework for providing fruit and vegetable incentives for low-income shoppers and that those federal funds are set to expire in March 2020. Further, the legislature finds that more than two million dollars in fruit and vegetable incentives have been redeemed by food insecure

Washingtonians through this grant, helping to alleviate food insecurity and increase fruit and vegetable consumption.

(4) Therefore, the legislature intends to create a state fruit and vegetable incentives program to benefit people who are food insecure, our agricultural industry, and retailers across the state."
[2019 c 168 s 1.]