

When Hunger Grows, Hope Shrinks: A Statement from St. John Center Regarding Federal Cuts to SNAP and TANF Benefits

In the wake of federal cuts to **SNAP** and **TANF**, St. John Center stands deeply concerned about how these decisions will worsen food insecurity for people already struggling with poverty and homelessness.

We see every day that **hunger and housing are inseparable**. When people do not have enough to eat, little else matters. Hunger drains energy, focus, and hope—making it nearly impossible to complete the daunting tasks of applying for benefits, finding housing, or securing identification.

While St. John Center does not provide meal services, **food is central to our Outreach work**. We help people **apply for and maintain SNAP benefits** and connect them to community food resources that meet immediate needs. Through partnerships with **Feed Louisville, Dare to Care, Louisville Outreach**, and the **emergency shelters** that surround us, we work together to fill a critical gap so that hunger is less of a barrier to housing. But we do not have this problem solved—and these cuts will only make that gap wider.

The new **federal cutbacks to food assistance** will disproportionately harm **young adults (18–24), adults aged 55–64 without dependents, and parents of older children** who now face expanded work or activity requirements. They also **roll back exemptions** for **veterans, people experiencing homelessness, and former foster youth**, forcing many to meet new compliance rules or risk disqualification. For **low-income households** living at the margins—especially those working unstable or low-wage jobs—eligibility is tightening further as deductions shrink, including the loss of certain basic expense allowances. Even **lawfully present immigrants** may face new restrictions or waiting periods that delay access to SNAP benefits.

When people are hungry, they are forced into **terrible decisions**—choosing between safety and survival. We have heard stories, including from a **Louisville Metro Police District Resource Officer** who experienced homelessness as a teen and immigrant, of how hunger left him vulnerable to **exploitative environments** where trafficking and coercion preyed on his need for food. These are the realities that emerge when policy ignores humanity.

Across all three of our programs—**Day Shelter, Street Outreach, and Permanent Supportive Housing**—we are **ramping up efforts** with partners to help clients **maintain access to food and health benefits** by connecting them to **workforce and**

educational opportunities where possible. For many, steady employment is the goal—but doing so without a stable home remains an enormous challenge.

At St. John Center, we know what works: housing ends homelessness, and food sustains the journey there. We urge policymakers to restore funding for food programs and invest in solutions that move people from crisis to stability.

Because hunger must never be a barrier to housing.