

# Public Service Announcements

## ***What is a public service announcement?***

Public Service Announcements, or PSAs, are public service messages that broadcasters air free of charge as part of their community service programs. Media outlets are required to donate airtime for PSAs.

## ***Does SNAP have PSAs that my organization can use?***

SNAP has a number of radio PSAs available for you to provide to local media outlets. All of the PSAs use messages that relate to target audiences. Like the national paid advertising, these messages also encourage people who are eligible for SNAP benefits to apply.

## ***Where can I find PSAs?***

You can listen to them, and stations can download them, at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cga/radio.htm>. Feel free to customize these PSAs with your own toll-free number and local message. At the end of this section, you will also find scripts of these same PSAs that you can produce and adapt locally.

## ***Can FNS' paid radio ads used be used as PSAs?***

No. The FNS ads were negotiated exclusively for commercial use, not for PSA distribution.

## ***What are my chances of placing PSAs?***

Because radio stations can accommodate only a limited number of these “free” advertising spots, and because there are many groups that want to increase awareness of their causes, pitching and placing PSAs can be challenging work. However, because SNAP offers such a tangible benefit to the community, the chances are good that the PSAs will be used. Ask the reporter for a contact at the station who is responsible for PSA placement.

## ***How do I pitch a PSA?***

As with a news story, the best way to pitch PSAs is to call or send a letter to the PSA director at the TV or radio station, present the local problem or situation, and show how you are providing a solution.

### **EXAMPLE**

“There are 100,000 hungry men, women, and children in Anytown. Many of these people may be eligible for SNAP benefits, but don’t know it. SNAP benefits can help them put good, healthy food on the table. At the same time, the local economy benefits from SNAP purchases.”

# 10 Steps to Place Public Service Announcements

*The steps in placing Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are similar to pitching regular stories to your local media.*

## Step 1 Compile Media List

Compile a media list of stations that are likely to have audiences who may be eligible for SNAP benefits and that are also likely to run PSAs. Gather contact information and add it to your list. Many stations have PSA directors who are responsible for determining which PSAs the station will air and when. (See the [Media Outreach](#) section of this toolkit for more information about media lists.)

## Step 2 Background Information

Before pitching your PSAs to a local radio station, learn more about the radio station, its programming (country, news, etc.), and its audience. Check out the station's Web site. The more informed you sound about the importance of SNAP messages to the station's audience, the more effective you will be. (See the [Media Outreach](#) section of this toolkit for more information about researching news outlets.)

## Step 3 Make Introductory Calls

Make introductory pitch calls before sending your PSAs to stations. Use these initial calls to double-check your contact information and build a rapport with public service and community affairs professionals. Ask for information about PSA submission requirements, such as format or length.

## Step 4 Make The Pitch

A sample pitch script is provided in this toolkit. The script provides an outline of the key points you need to cover during a phone conversation or voicemail message with the community or public affairs contact. Use the script as a reference to make sure you cover all of the important points. Practice your pitch aloud at least once before calling. Do not read directly from the script as you talk. Downloadable PSAs are available on the FNS Web site <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/radio/default.htm>

## Step 5 Deliver PSAs To Stations

Consider personally delivering your PSAs and a cover letter to the stations on your list. If you have not yet established a relationship, mail your materials. Follow up about a week later.

## Step 6 Make Follow Up Calls

If needed, continue placing follow up calls for several weeks to find out if your announcement will run.



### Best Time to Pitch PSAs

PSAs can be used at any time of year, but your pitch to radio stations will be more effective if you can find a "hook" to encourage them to run the announcements. This could include:

#### End of School

In communities that don't participate in the Summer Food Service Program, many children who receive at least one full, healthy meal a day during the school year lose that safety net in the summer, when school is out.

#### Holiday Season

People are acutely aware of hunger and nutrition issues around the holidays.

#### During National or Local "Awareness" Weeks or Months

Some awareness weeks may make audiences more receptive to SNAP information — for example, National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week (which is the week before Thanksgiving) and National Nutrition Month (March).

#### When Paid Advertisements Are Running

Paid advertisements from the national media campaign may be running in your area (you can find out by visiting [http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/radio-buys\\_2010.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/radio-buys_2010.htm)). If paid advertisements are airing locally, use that information to leverage your PSA request.

## Step 7 Provide Additional Information

Once you begin pitching your PSAs, some radio stations may request more information about SNAP benefits or your work to reduce hunger. The [Media Outreach](#) section of this toolkit contains media and messaging materials to help prepare your spokesperson.

## Step 8 Measure Success

Ask your contacts at the radio stations if they can provide you with specific information on when and how many times your PSA was aired. Track the success of your effort by identifying any increase in the number of calls to your toll-free number during the period when the PSAs ran.

## Step 9 Present Findings

Compile your evaluation findings into a memo or presentation to share with your organization and/or partners.

## Step 10 Take It To The Next Level

Based on the success of your PSA campaign, you may want to consider a formal partnership with the station, perhaps along with a commercial underwriter such as a grocery store. For more information about partnerships, see the [Partnership](#) section of this toolkit.

# Public Service Announcement Readers

## **What are “readers”?**

“Readers” are brief announcements promoting SNAP. Readers are given to radio stations so that their on-air talent can read them live whenever time permits.

*Format for readers should include time for message and tagline.*

## **SAMPLE READERS**

### **:10 SECONDS**

#### **SAMPLE 1**

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program helps low-income people eat right when money’s tight. Call 1-800-221-5689 today. (6.5)  
A message from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. (3.5)

#### **SAMPLE 2**

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program can help you or someone you know to eat right when money’s tight. Call 1-800-221-5689 today. (6.5)  
A message from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. (3.5)

### **:15 SECONDS**

#### **SAMPLE 1**

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program can help stretch your budget at the grocery store. It’ll help you eat right when money’s tight. Call 1-800-221-5689 today. (11.5)  
A message from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. (3.5)

#### **SAMPLE 2**

Keeping up with the fast pace of life takes eating right, especially when money’s tight. If you have low income, consider the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Call 1-800-221-5689 today. (11.5)  
A message from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. (3.5)

#### **SAMPLE 3**

Attention low-income seniors — the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program can help you eat right when money’s tight. Call 1-800-221-5689 for more information. (11.5)  
A message from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. (3.5)

# PSA Pitch Script Template

(Note: This sample script targets stations with elderly audiences.)

Hello, my name is XX and I am calling from [YOUR ORGANIZATION]. Is this a good time? (*If not, ask when you can call them back.*) You may not be aware that XX elderly people in [NAME OF STATE/CITY] are having trouble putting food on the table, and are not taking advantage of help that they qualify for.

[YOUR ORGANIZATION] is hoping you will help us address this situation by broadcasting PSAs about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). By spreading the message about SNAP benefits, older members of our community will learn more about the program and how to enroll.

Is this something you think you or your station would be interested in using? I'd be happy to send you some sample PSAs. Please feel free to contact me at XX if you have any questions about SNAP or the PSAs. Again, my name is XX and my number is XX.

# Cover Letter for Using Local Readers for PSAs

[DATE]

To: Public Affairs Director

From: [NAME & ORGANIZATION]

RE: [CITY/STATE] SNAP Outreach Effort

*(You can add additional information like “To Help Elderly Access Benefits”)*

Only about half of those eligible to receive SNAP benefits are currently enrolled. In [STATE/CITY/TOWN], low-income seniors are feeling the pinch due to bills and other expenses, and are not getting the proper nutrition. By defraying the cost of groceries, SNAP allows recipients to use their limited incomes on other important basic needs like housing, medical costs, transportation, and utilities.

[YOUR ORGANIZATION] is kicking off a “Benefit Bus” tour on [DATE] to help seniors in [STATE/CITY/TOWN] access SNAP benefits without the challenge of finding transportation to a local SNAP office. This bus tour will span X days and X locations from [TIME]. SNAP outreach coordinators will be on hand to prescreen seniors and provide a checklist of necessary paperwork.

Below are scripts for PSAs notifying your listeners about upcoming enrollment activities. We would appreciate it if your station would read these announcements as often as possible before the event kicks off on [DATE] and throughout the [TIME FRAME OF EVENT]. Thank you in advance for helping connect seniors in [STATE/CITY/TOWN] to the nutrition assistance they need.

## **RADIO (15 seconds)**

SNAP helps you buy the groceries you need. You may qualify and not know it.

[YOUR ORGANIZATION]’s “Benefit Bus” tour will stop at assisted living locations in [NAME OF CITY/TOWN] from [DATE] to [DATE]. Find out more by calling XXX-XXX-XXXX.

## **RADIO (30 seconds)**

With bills and doctor visits, expenses can add up quickly. Sometimes, that makes it hard to put good food on the table. SNAP helps you buy the groceries you need. You may qualify and not know it.

Eligibility for SNAP benefits is based on income and other expenses. For most seniors, the benefit is enough to make a real difference. [YOUR ORGANIZATION]’s “Benefit Bus” tour will stop at assisted living locations in [NAME OF CITY/TOWN] from [DATE] to [DATE].

Find out more by calling XXX-XXX-XXXX.

# Cover Letter for Using USDA-Produced PSAs

[DATE]

To: Public Affairs Director  
From: [NAME & ORGANIZATION]  
RE: SNAP Outreach Effort

Have you ever had to choose between paying the heating bill or having enough food for dinner? Have you been faced with the impossible choice of buying medicine for your sick child or food for the family table? Every day, thousands of people in [NAME OF STATE/TOWN/CITY] grapple with issues like these. But they don't have to.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps low-income people purchase nutritious, healthy food. However, only half of those eligible to receive SNAP benefits are currently enrolled.

At [YOUR ORGANIZATION], we are working hard to raise awareness about SNAP benefits in our community. Many people have a difficult time making ends meet. By helping out with the grocery bill, SNAP benefits allow recipients to use their limited income on other important basic needs like housing, medical costs, transportation, and utilities. We are interested in working with your station to inform listeners about SNAP and how to enroll.

In addition to PSA scripts and readers, taped PSAs are available. We can send you these fully produced spots via e-mail or on a CD. We would appreciate it if your station could roll these announcements into your programming and air them as often as possible.

*(Mention how you will follow up with the station and how they can contact you.)*

Thank you in advance for helping our community "eat right when money's tight."

[NAME & ORGANIZATION]