

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

# WHAT IS AN IMPROPER PAYMENT?

SNAP's measure of improper payments is not a measure of fraud. In fact, the vast majority of improper payments are due to unintentional errors. An **improper payment** in SNAP can occur for any of the following reasons:



Incorrect amounts paid to an eligible client



Payments made to a client incorrectly determined as eligible



Payments for which insufficient or no documentation was found



## IMPROPER PAYMENTS INCLUDE BOTH OVERPAYMENTS AND UNDERPAYMENTS

Not all improper payments represent a loss to the government.



*Due to rounding, the payment error rate may not always equal the sum of the overpayment and underpayment error rate.*

## WHAT CAUSES IMPROPER PAYMENTS IN SNAP?



### ADMINISTRATIVE OR PROCESS ERRORS

An eligible client could receive a payment that is too high or low due to an error in data entry or processing the application.



### FAILURE TO VERIFY OR ACT UPON DATA MATCHES

States are required to do certain matches for citizenship, work status, and other eligibility criteria.



### FAILURE TO PROVIDE ACCURATE AND TIMELY INFORMATION

A client can be required to report information such as earnings, expenses, or assets.

## ACTIONS TO REDUCE IMPROPER PAYMENTS IN SNAP

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) requires State agencies with high rates of improper payments to develop a corrective action plan to address the root cause(s) of the improper payments. FNS has also taken actions to improve the integrity of the SNAP improper payment measurement system. Examples of some successful actions by States and FNS include:

### FNS ACTIONS



Utilizing new data sources to enhance verification of reported information.



Updating guidance and manuals; working with states to update their procedures.



Conducting training for state and federal staff on quality control procedures and policy.



Implementing an annual in depth management evaluation review of state operations.

### STATE ACTIONS



Training case workers to ensure policy is understood and correctly applied.



Improving or expanding data matching capabilities to verify reported income, deductions, or assets.



Improving customer service to make it easier for recipients to report changes.



Using data analytics to identify root causes for errors in order to develop corrective action plans.