

3SquaresVT and the Importance of Food Choice

3SquaresVT Prevents Hunger And Poor Health

- 92,000 Vermonters participate in 3SquaresVT, (known nationally as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), bringing over \$11 million federal dollars into the Vermont economy every month.¹
- 3SquaresVT is our first line of defense against hunger, providing Vermonters with a consistent, reliable, and dignified means of increasing their food purchasing power.
- Chronic hunger and food insecurity increases the risk of poor health, obesity, academic failure and developmental delay. 3SquaresVT not only decreases hunger but decreases poor health and hospitalization, especially among young children and elders.²



Limiting Food Choice Is Not The Solution

- Restrictions on 3SquaresVT purchases would increase cost and complexity of program administration, and could translate into higher costs for all consumers. There are no clear standards for defining foods as healthy or not healthy.³
- Public health experts support increasing 3SquaresVT participation as part of an overall obesity-prevention strategy, but benefit restrictions would likely increase stigma in the program and decrease participation.⁴
- There is no strong research-based evidence to support restricting benefits. In fact, research shows that 3SquaresVT participants make similar food choices to non-participants at all income levels.⁵



Created March 2011
Hunger Free Vermont
38 Eastwood Drive, Suite 100 • South Burlington, VT 05403
(802) 865-0255 • www.hungerfreevt.org • info@hungerfreevt.org

3SquaresVT and the Importance of Food Choice

Encouraging Healthy Food Choices For All

Promising opportunities to improve the food choices of 3SquaresVT participants include⁵:

- Supporting 3SquaresVT usage at farmers' markets and for CSA shares
- Offering incentives for fruit and vegetable purchases
- Enhancing nutrition education
- Improving benefit levels so people can afford more healthy foods



Sources:

- ¹ Vermont Department for Children and Families, 3SquaresVT Caseload Data, January 2011.
- ² *Food Stamps as Medicine*, Children's HealthWatch, February 2007.
- ³ *Implications of Restricting the Use of Food Stamp Benefits*, USDA Food and Nutrition Service, March 2007.
- ⁴ *Preventing Obesity*, CQ Researcher, October 1, 2010.
- ⁵ *Can Food Stamps Do More to Improve Food Choices? An Economic Perspective*, USDA Economic Research Service, September 2007.



Created March 2011
Hunger Free Vermont
38 Eastwood Drive, Suite 100 • South Burlington, VT 05403
(802) 865-0255 • www.hungerfreevt.org • info@hungerfreevt.org