

**Pilot Program Increase Access to Public Benefits  
For Older Dual Eligible Seniors**

**Session Law 2017-57, Section 11.C.8.(b)**



**Report to the**

**Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on  
Health and Human Services**

**and**

**Office of the Governor**

**By**

**North Carolina Department of  
Health and Human Services**

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## **Background**

Session Law 2016-94, states that the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services (Division), shall establish an evidence-based pilot program to increase access to public benefits for seniors 65 and older who are dually enrolled in Medicare and Medicaid to (i) improve the health and independence of seniors and (ii) reduce health care costs. The Division shall partner with a non-profit firm for the purpose of engaging in a data-driven campaign to help seniors aged 65 and older enrolled who are dually enrolled in Medicare and Medicaid meet their basic social needs. The not-for-profit firm shall have demonstrated experience in assisting with these types of services and the partnership shall accomplish each of the following:

- (1) Identify through data sharing, dual eligible seniors aged 65 and older who qualify For Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program (SNAP) but not currently enrolled.
- (2) Conduct an outreach program towards those seniors for the purpose of enrolling them into SNAP.
- (3) Provide comprehensive application assistance through outreach specialists to complete public benefits application processes.
- (4) Evaluate project effectiveness and explore how data can be utilized to achieve optimal outcomes.
- (5) Make recommendations regarding policy options available to the State to streamline access to benefits.

The law states the Division of Social Services shall report to the Office of the Governor and the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services on its progress in the pilot program by February 1 following each year the pilot program is in place. The report shall, at a minimum, include the following:

- (1) The number of seniors age 65 and older who are dual Eligible but are not enrolled in SNAP.
- (2) the number of those identified that would be included in the sample population.
- (3) Methods of outreach toward those seniors in the sample population
- (4) Number of to date enrollments in SNAP as a direct result of outreach during the pilot program.
- (5) Participation rate to date in SNAP of those seniors in the sample population.
- (6) Any other findings the Division deems relevant.

Benefits Data Trust (BDT) was awarded the Pilot Project for Dual-Eligibles Not Receiving SNAP/FNS project on March 7, 2017. To ensure provisions in the law as well as NC Department of Health and Human Services privacy and security policies were met, the project launched in December 2017 and was extended to June 30, 2019. Last year, BDT funded the project through philanthropic funding from grants and partners.

This report identifies the outcomes for BDT beginning January 2020 through September 30, 2020 as well as SFY 2020-21 plan.

**Overview of Grant Implementation and BDT Dual Eligible Pilot Project**

The North Carolina Benefits Center is operated by BDT to provide application assistance to NC residents. The Division of Social Services identified approximately 60,000 dually eligible seniors during FY 2019-20. The North Carolina Benefits Center contacted 22,481 dual eligibles not yet enrolled in SNAP resulting in the submission of over 4,785 SNAP applications. Of those applications, 2,510 were successfully enrolled in SNAP/FNS between January 2020 and September 30, 2020.

In BDT’s efforts to assist North Carolina attain its goal of helping older North Carolinians access much needed food assistance, and therefore lower their Medicaid healthcare costs, many interesting facts were revealed that include:

- Seniors in North Carolina who are receiving Medicaid are highly likely eligible for SNAP / FNS
- With response rates up to 22% (compared to 1 – 3% for typical direct mail), this population needs and wants benefits application and enrollment assistance, and the state agency messaging resonates with them.
- The annual average benefit amount for this population is \$536, which increased their annual income by 4.1% on average (from approximately \$12,942 to \$13,478).

During the 2019 legislative session, there were no funding allocated to continue the pilot project. However, through given success BDT continued the partnership during FY 2019-2020 from January 2020 through September 30, 2020 with philanthropic funding via Walmart and other partners.

During the 2020 legislative session, Session Law 2020-97 (106) required Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services, to continue increasing access to Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) benefits for individuals who are dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Appropriation in the amount \$600,000 was granted for the period of October 2020 through December 31,2020. Through federal legislation the funding was extended through June 30, 2021.

Given this success, it is BDT’s goal to assist over 1,800 seniors and submit over 1,300 applications during SFY 2020-21.

**Project Plan of Action State Contract Year 2020- 2021 - COVID Relief Funds (CRF)**

Activity	Description	Performance Measure
<i>Targeted Identification</i>	Use data-driven strategies to identify and target outreach to seniors enrolled in Medicaid but not yet enrolled in SNAP	DHHS will identify approximately <b>16,800</b> dual eligible seniors for SNAP outreach; BDT will contact the senior via mail to provide application assistance

<i>Comprehensive Application Assistance</i>	Offer eligibility pre-screenings. If the household is found to be likely eligible, BDT will provide comprehensive application assistance	Submit <b>1,800</b> SNAP/FNS applications on behalf of dual eligible seniors
<i>Successful Enrollment</i>	Confirm enrollment outcomes through analysis of data provided by NC	Enroll <b>1,300</b> dual eligibles in SNAP over 9 months