

Blue Ridge Hunger Action Coalition - Agenda & Minutes

July 14th, 2026

AGENDA:

- Introductions
 - Organizational Updates
 - SNAP & Public Benefits
 - Cville Feeding 500
 - Community Fridges
 - Events & Announcements
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NOTES:

- **Introductions:**
 - **Shannon Meade** (PVCC - Student Resource Center & Panther Pantry), **Hanna Strauss** (Move2HealthEquity & BRHAC), **Grace Bugler** (Student Research Assistant for the Sustainable Food Initiative at UVA), **Anna Byfield** (Meals on Wheels of Charlottesville and Albemarle), **Cecile Gorham** (Market Central - SNAP & Virginia Fresh Match at Starr Hill & IX), **Kimberley Barker** (Community & Outreach Services Librarian at UVA Library & Cville Carebears), **Elly Haden** (UVA Nutrition team), **Naomi McDermott** (Church of Our Saviour Food Pantry), **MyKal Lofton** (Produce Prescription Manager at Shalom Farms), **Nicole Pierce** (Cavelier Food Pantry at UVA), **KJ Howard** (Community Farm Coordinator & Urban Agriculture Coalition), **Rhonda Oliver** (Feeding Greene Food Pantry), **Paola Covarubias** (Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry), **Chloe Fridley** (Ivy Creek Foundation), **Erica Uhlmann** (Blue Ridge Area Food Bank), **Shelly Bryant** (Westhaven Cares Nursing Clinic & Food Pantry), **Sarah King** (Population Health Manger with Blue Ridge Health District in the Charlottesville office), **Lisa Murray** (JABA Community Engagement Manager), **Peggy Scott** (Yancey Community Food Pantry & Health Equity and Access to Rural Regions)
- **Updates:**
 - Market Central: Seeing dips in folks bringing SNAP to the Market
 - Redeeming SNAP numbers are down but the fresh match is still applied to double the money

- Just finished up a round of double match; the state is using unspent funds for this initiative (but limited outreach time of only ~1 week notice from the state)
- + Private donors are supporting SNAP customers through additional funds
- Church of our Saviour experiencing higher volumes and less face to face clients due to community fears and targetting
- Shalom Farms in the 2nd year of USDA grant
- Wegmans bag donations:
 - <https://www.wegmans.com/values-in-action/community-giving> (lengthy if you're in the first application but worth it and quick after the application goes through)
- UVA Annual report and 24,000+ visits to the pantry
- Cultivate Charlottesville - resident info and surveys around surveys
 - Farmers market incentives have started (goal to encourage participation) → Lead: Jordan Johnson - Jordan@cultivatecharlottesville.org
 - Farming connection and education through Cultivate and connection to farmer markets → Lead: KJ Howard - KJ@cultivatecharlottesville.org
 - Community Market days: Flyer attached & giving away mainly vegetables and flowers for distribution. In the Fall looking to pumpkin and other options available.
 - Food Justice Network: Community updates, Harvest of the Month starting up next month, Planks addressing food justice in the area. → Lead: Jordan Johnson - Jordan@cultivatecharlottesville.org & Aleen Carey: aleen@cultivatecharlottesville.org
- Feeding Greene - seeing increase of 60+ years old and as of January serving 300 more clients than we were prior. Currently renovating another building to support the backpack program since that doubled last year. We also started a little sprouts program last year to introduce preschoolers to new produce and started container gardens - going into the first full year of this program going 1x a month. A boy scout is working on his eagle scout badge to build a two tier herb garden with participation from clients.
- Ivy Creek Foundation - Historic African American farm founded by an agricultural extension agent. Today, the farm is excited to get connected to history and connect with local food justice initiatives and community organizations.
 - Annual Farm Day: October 17th 11am-3pm — Celebrates & invites folks to table if they have information related to African American farming, food justices, etc. Open to the public and there are farm animals, historic barn, and lots of information to share. → Lead: Chloe Fridley - chloe@ivycreekfoundation.org
- Westhaven Clinic - 4th Wednesday of the month with BRAFB for free produce and purchased AC for tenants, giving away gently used clothes, AC units needed

(donation drive) → Lead: Shelly Bryant - bryants@charlottesville.gov

- Community Health improvement plan work & CHIP meeting tomorrow (7/15) with follow up on the plan and next steps → Lead: Sarah King -

sarah.king@vdh.virginia.gov

- CHIP webpage (signup link for updates at the bottom of the page):
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/blue-ridge/chip-2/>
- Report PDF: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/196/BRHD-2025-2028-CHIP.pdf>
- Community Health Improvement Plan virtual community meeting at 9 a.m. tomorrow 7/15: <https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/218566204626991?p=EhCbJucwkiqhNwwKVI>.

- **SNAP & Public Benefits Update**

- [via Move2HealthEquity Meeting (7/8) with Kelly Logan at Charlottesville DSS]
- Work Requirement:
 - Any able bodied adult without children (or with children above the age of 14), can only participate in SNAP through SNAP-ED. SNAP-ED is SNAP Employment/etc where each participant is connected to a social worker. Participants of SNAP-ED are only eligible for 3 months of SNAP within 3 years (a rolling 36 month period). Participants have a chance to regain eligibility by working a minimum of 80 hours a month x minimum wage of 7.25. Participants must provide proof via pay stubs or a wage form signed by their employer. DSS has identified that if a participant is working more than 20 hours, then they are most likely making too much money to participate in SNAP at all. Volunteer hours are eligible as work hours.
- Exemptions to Work Requirement:
 - Previously exempt → People experiencing homeless and/or chronic homelessness, kids under 18, young adults aging out of foster care, veterans, disabled people, etc
 - Currently required to participate in SNAP-ED → Veterans, young adults aging out of foster care, caregivers with children over the age of 14, seniors up to the age of 65, etc.
 - Refugees are losing benefits and those without green cards are no longer eligible
 - Additionally, those experiencing chronic homelessness are no longer eligible and are required with a social worker to identify causes of homelessness
- SNAP Employment and Training:
 - Participants are required to meet with a case manager, talk about housing, criminal issues, mental health, etc. and work together to try and put services in place for the participant

- Social workers are able to distribute: Gas vouchers, clothes vouchers, small amount of rent (up to 1,500), car repairs, etc.
 - \$25,000 per department per year. Each locality is allocated funding, and you have to demonstrate use of funds by mid-year. Virginia needs to utilize their supportive services budget in order to provide proof of need.
 - **What is needed to gain access? What is the barrier to access?**
 - (Proof of job? Proof of residency? etc?)
 - Contact → Shelly Bryant - bryants@charlottesville.gov
 - If unable to utilize help line through city services → Advocates to use St Vincent of Pauls, church connections, etc.
- Skimming:
 - Began 2 years ago with dozens of folks coming in and saying they didn't have any money on their cards. Money was and is still being stolen from people's cards before they even have time to set up the pin on the card. There was a short period of time when skimming first started, where the state was reimbursing SNAP participants but that ended quickly. Now there is no recourse for stolen benefits and some people have had benefits stolen multiple times.
 - State response is to issue chip cards; however these cards are expensive and do not address the issue of skimming. These cards will be rolled out to SNAP participants by the end of the year. These cards will need to be activated within 60 days of receiving the card, and if lost or stolen need to be replaced within 90 days. A new card will cost \$4.99. Clients will receive a 'vault card' as a replacement while their new chip card is sent to them in the mail. The fee can be waived by the participant's social worker if there is a demonstrated need.
 - SNAP App → DSS recommends not downloading the app due to incorrect information and lack of security
 - Call number → There is an issue with the help line where if a participant calls too many times then their number will be blocked. So DSS workers recommend talking directly with social workers over the phone or in person.
- Sun Bucks & Kids Summer EBT:
 - Program managed at the state level through schools.
 - Clients and folks connected to the program hear about the same issues as in the past summers (ie late delivery of cards, incorrect delivery, inconsistent distribution of funds to families, etc)
 - Market Central at IX has seen a few cards at the market, pantries have heard that some folks have received cards while others have not.
 - There is a Sun Bucks app
- Sun Bucks & Kids Summer EBT:

- State level management that goes through out through the schools, same issues as in past year (late, etc)
- Market central has seen a few cards come through the market
- Hearing that some folks havent recieved the cards yet, there is still issues,
- SUN BUCKs app
- Medicaid:
 - Participants must have proof of the work requirement before application, which is different than SNAP where it is needed after application
 - DSS is making referrals to career work centers & career works but statewide they dont want the work requirement to be pushed to career work centers and career works
- Error rate:
 - Virginia state was 11% and need to be under 6% (otherwise the state will have to make up the difference of program costs)
 - DSS now have to verify expenses. Needing documentation otherwise participants do not get credit for utilities like trash, water, phone, utilities, rent. Internet is no longer considered a utility that provides credit towards expenses.
- **Fund Groceries for our Immigrant Neighbors:** https://www.paypal.com/donate?campaign_id=QFX5QZSKBYAF8