Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training Rapid Cycle Evaluation: Connecticut

Final Report

November 2024

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Samantha Dardenne, Alex Marketos, Daniel Friend, Leah Shiferaw, Gretchen Rowe, James Mabli

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Executive Summary

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides food benefits to eligible individuals with low incomes. For some, it also provides employment and training (E&T) services to improve participants' economic self-sufficiency. This report describes the Food and Nutrition Services' use of rapid cycle evaluation (RCE) to test new, low-cost, small-scale interventions in SNAP E&T operations in Connecticut.

Connecticut operates a voluntary SNAP E&T program statewide. The Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS) contracts with community colleges and community-based organizations to provide SNAP E&T services. The statewide network of community colleges, Connecticut State Community College (CT State), offers free courses and training at its 12 campuses to unemployed and under-employed SNAP participants who are not receiving TANF benefits.

Intervention

CT State sought to standardize and improve case management processes for its SNAP E&T program. With support from Mathematica, CT State developed an intervention that consisted of implementing a new, participant-driven assessment tool during case management and sending a text message reminder with behavioral nudges to students participating in SNAP E&T who received a referral to support services, encouraging them to follow up on the referral and seek out the services. Mathematica conducted an evaluation that included a randomized controlled trial to estimate the intervention's impact on engagement with SNAP E&T, and an assessment of how the intervention was implemented, the challenges encountered and solutions to address them, and participants' experiences.

Outcomes

Text messages did not have an impact on referral take-up and ongoing SNAP E&T participation. Among the 16 students who received a referral to support services, rates of referral take-up and ongoing enrollment in SNAP E&T were similar between the treatment group (students who received a text message reminder) and the control group (students who did not receive a text message). One of 9 treatment group members reported receiving services from the organization they were referred to, compared to 2 of 7 control group members; 7 of 9 treatment group members reported being enrolled one to two months after being randomly assigned, compared to 5 of 7 control group members.

Factors that facilitated or hindered implementation

CT State reported that participating in the RCE process provided an opportunity for staff to discuss challenges and identify needs specific to the SNAP E&T program at each campus. The SNAP E&T enrollment and assessment processes varied by campus, and a delay in the intervention start date posed a challenge to consistent implementation of the intervention. Staff had limited capacity to assume new responsibilities and found it challenging to implement the intervention in addition to their regular duties.

Lessons learned

Staff found that the assessment was a helpful tool in guiding their conversations with students and identifying areas where additional support could facilitate success in the program. Texting has the potential to be an effective communication tool within the SNAP E&T program. The administrative burden associated with sending text message reminders could also be incorporated into regular case management duties, making the intervention more sustainable to continue.

I.   Introduction

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the cornerstone of the nation's nutrition safety net and provides food benefits to eligible individuals with low incomes who are experiencing economic hardship. In addition to providing food assistance, SNAP provides work supports through employment and training (E&T) programs that help SNAP participants gain skills, training, or work experience to increase their ability to obtain regular employment. State agencies are required to operate an E&T program and have considerable flexibility to determine the services they offer and populations they serve. SNAP participants use these programs to meet work requirements, if applicable, and retain their benefits.

One of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service's (FNS) strategic goals and priorities is to ensure the quality of the services and activities offered through SNAP E&T programs. Over the last 10 years, FNS has invested considerable resources and provided technical assistance to help States build capacity, create more robust services, and increase engagement in their programs. A typical State, however, has limited time and resources to make substantial changes to its business process,

> **Study objectives**
>
> 1. Describe how RCEs can be used to improve SNAP E&T operations, service delivery, and program outcomes
> 2. Design and implement RCEs to obtain impact estimates of small-scale changes on SNAP E&T outcomes for each intervention
> 3. Conduct an implementation evaluation of the small-scale changes and RCEs in each intervention
> 4. Assess the scalability of the small-scale changes to SNAP E&T operations and service delivery to other local, State, or national policies and programs
> 5. Determine and document the costs associated with implementing and maintaining the small-scale changes ◢

service delivery approach, or service options given their existing responsibilities of Federal compliance operations, running the program, monitoring providers, and growing the program.

Exhibit I.1. Rapid cycle evaluation

FNS contracted with Mathematica to provide States the opportunity to test low-cost, small-scale interventions in SNAP E&T operations or service delivery using rapid cycle evaluation (RCE). RCE is a powerful method for improving programs' efficiency and effectiveness. It follows a series of steps to identify challenges and define and test potential solutions (Exhibit I.1).

FNS selected Connecticut, four other States, and the District of Columbia to operate interventions, with the aim of improving SNAP E&T programs and identifying how to

strengthen the technical assistance provided to States. From 2021 to 2024, Mathematica collaborated with the intervention sites to identify the major challenges their SNAP E&T programs faced, like recruitment and outreach, and to create and test solutions.

RCE addressed five main objectives (see Study objectives box). This report describes the RCE process, intervention design and implementation, and findings from the small-scale changes Connecticut made to its SNAP E&T program.[1]

II.   Connecticut SNAP E&T Program

Connecticut operates a voluntary SNAP E&T program statewide. The Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS) contracts with community colleges and community-based organizations to provide SNAP E&T services, primarily through vocational training programs that improve employability through career and technical education (CTE) and other post-secondary credentials. The community colleges offer free courses and training to unemployed and under-employed SNAP participants who are not receiving TANF benefits.

Individuals typically learn about SNAP E&T through outreach and marketing conducted by the community colleges. Each community college advertises the program through social media posts, advertisements, and community partners that engage SNAP participants. Students enroll in SNAP E&T through direct referrals from DSS after approval of their SNAP application or recertification, or through reverse referrals from a SNAP E&T Coordinator at the community college. Some individuals who respond to outreach materials by contacting a SNAP E&T Coordinator may already be enrolled in SNAP when they express interest in the E&T program. Students participating in SNAP E&T receive case management from the SNAP E&T Coordinator at the college where they enroll in the program.

SNAP E&T Coordinators help participating students enroll in vocational training programs at the colleges and/or connect them to externships with outside employers. Some programs provide credit towards a degree, though the availability of course offerings and training for specific industries varies by campus. Students at select colleges also take a 14-hour-long job skills course that includes job readiness, job search skills, and soft-skills training. In addition to providing case management, SNAP E&T Coordinators oversee student participation in the E&T program by conducting assessments for educational readiness and other barriers to participation, providing direct benefits or reimbursements for materials such as books and work clothes, referring students to needed support services on campus or in the community, and monitoring students' academic progress.

> 📷 **Connecticut SNAP E&T program**
> - **Area served:** Statewide
> - **Target population:** Work registrants
> - **Number served by E&T:** Around 1,000
> - **Referral type:** Direct and reverse referrals
> - **SNAP E&T providers:** Community colleges and community-based organizations
> - **CT State community college campuses:** Tunxis, Manchester, Norwalk, Naugatuck Valley, Asnuntuck, Gateway, Three Rivers, Housatonic, Capital, Quinebaug Valley, Northwestern, and Middlesex

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[1] Reports for the other sites in the project are available at https://www.fns.usda.gov/research-analysis.

Twelve community colleges initially participated, with nine participating in the implementation phase. During the site selection and design phase in 2021, the colleges operated independently. In 2023, they merged into a unified, statewide system based on a "one-college model" and began operating as individual campuses in the CT State network.

The SNAP E&T program in Connecticut serves all work registrants. In 2022, the community colleges had around 100 total students enroll in SNAP E&T per month, on average. SNAP E&T Coordinators reported that many students participating in SNAP E&T experience barriers to work such as a lack of childcare or transportation, language barriers, prior involvement with the criminal justice system, or a need to develop soft skills.

III.   Overview of Intervention

A.   Intervention development

In May 2021, Mathematica began working with the community colleges to understand their SNAP E&T operations, identify the challenges they face in their program, and develop potential solutions to test. The Learn, Innovate, and Improve (LI²) model was used to guide the colleges through this process (Exhibit III.1). This was a collaborative, co-creative partnership between Mathematica and the community colleges.

The Learn phase took place between May and July 2021. The focus was to assess the needs of the community colleges, the major challenges they faced, and the underlying causes of these challenges. This involved a series of brainstorming sessions and interactive activities that relied on human-centered design principles. The activities included rose-bud-thorn (having individuals name aspects of the program that were positive, areas for growth,

Exhibit III.1. Learn, Innovate, and Improve (LI²) model

or challenges), affinity clustering (sorting named aspects into categories), and problem tree analysis (working through the root causes and effects of challenges). Through this process, SNAP E&T Coordinators identified three primary challenges related to case management: a lack of training and standardized case management processes between colleges; barriers faced by students that hinder program engagement and completion; and that many students do not seek out the support services to which they are referred.

The Innovate phase took place in July and August 2021. Mathematica worked with SNAP E&T Coordinators and CT State leadership (at the time, three regional representatives for the colleges) to

identify and develop potential solutions to the primary challenges identified in the Learn phase. The team began to brainstorm solutions to the primary challenges identified; however, the extent to which the main issues identified were perceived as challenges varied across colleges. SNAP E&T Coordinators had different perceptions of which challenges should be the focus of the intervention, based on the priorities and primary concerns at each individual campus. Mathematica consulted with the CT State leadership team to determine which solutions would have the broadest impact across the colleges.

As a result of these conversations, CT State selected challenges related to case management as the primary focus of the project. The team identified an intervention that would address program challenges, centering on a new assessment tool and a text message. Mathematica and CT State co-designed the evaluation, which included a randomized controlled trial (RCT) to measure impact and an implementation study that assessed the intervention's design, operations, staff and students' experiences, and replicability.

In July 2023, the individual colleges merged into the CT State system. CT State expressed concern about staff capacity for the intervention during the merger. As part of the Improve phase, Mathematica sought feedback from CT State staff on any necessary changes to the intervention and worked with the leadership team to adjust the planned intervention procedures and minimize administrative burden for SNAP E&T Coordinators. Mathematica traveled to Connecticut in August 2023 to train SNAP E&T Coordinators on the new assessment tool and the intervention procedures, with the intention of beginning the intervention that month. Later that month, the start of the intervention was delayed due to staffing changes at CT State and reduced site capacity.

From August 2023 to February 2024, Mathematica worked with the CT State administration to identify community college leadership for the study and finalize planning. CT State adjusted the intervention design to reflect the new timeframe (described in section B) and Mathematica conducted a second, virtual training for SNAP E&T Coordinators in February 2024. CT State launched the intervention in February 2024 and concluded it in May 2024.

B. Intervention overview

The intervention was designed to address three major challenges related to case management: a lack of training and standardized case management processes between colleges; individual barriers that hinder program engagement and completion; and that many students do not seek out the support services to which they are referred.

To help address these challenges, SNAP E&T Coordinators used a new, participant-driven assessment tool—*Stepping Stones to College Success*[2]—to implement in their case management processes (Appendix A). A participant-driven assessment focuses on individual strengths, motivations, and goals, centering the participant and their agency in the case management process. The *Stepping Stones* assessment identifies a range of barriers a student may be facing, asking students to identify areas in their life where they need help and areas in which they are thriving. As part of the assessment process, SNAP E&T Coordinators

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[2] Adapted from Mathematica's *Stepping Stones to Success* assessment tool.

worked with students to discuss the context of the barriers identified and asked students to set a goal to address the most important challenges.

The target population for the intervention was all students who applied to the SNAP E&T program and agreed to participate in the evaluation. When the intervention began, all students in the target population were eligible to receive the *Stepping Stones* assessment.

Students in the treatment group received a text message reminder if the SNAP E&T Coordinator provided the student a referral to external (or on-campus) support services, such as a food pantry, housing service, or laptop loaner program (Appendix B). The text message language included a behavioral nudge (a small change to a program, policy, system, or practice that is meant to influence the choices individuals make) and contact information for the referral organization, based on the information provided by SNAP E&T Coordinators. Students in the control group did not receive a text message reminder. CT State used a texting platform to automatically send the text messages; students in the treatment group would receive one text message reminder if a referral was provided. Students' names, their phone numbers, and information provided by SNAP E&T Coordinators about the referral organization were uploaded into the texting platform to send the text messages. All students participating in the evaluation completed a consent form that provided information about the study and the intervention. Exhibit III.2 provides an overview of the intervention process.

Prior to the merger, CT State expressed concern about SNAP E&T Coordinators' capacity to carry out the administrative functions associated with the intervention. Mathematica worked with CT State to streamline the intervention procedures by adjusting the process for random assignment and providing support with data management. The goal of these adjustments was to simplify the process for SNAP E&T Coordinators and facilitate successful implementation of the intervention by reducing burden. Nine campuses ultimately participated in the implementation phase.

⟷ Behavioral nudge concepts

- **Endowed progress effect:** Encouraging the individual to reach a goal that they have already made progress towards

⚛ Intervention components

- All students in the target population were eligible to receive a participant-driven assessment tool, *Stepping Stones to College Success*, during case management

- Mathematica conducted an RCT to estimate the impact of a behaviorally informed text message reminder about referrals to support services provided by SNAP E&T Coordinators:

1. **Treatment group:** An individual participating in SNAP E&T at a CT State community college who received a referral to support services received a behavioral nudge text message reminder

2. **Control group:** An individual participating in SNAP E&T at a CT State community college who received typical case management, which does not include a text message reminder about referrals to support services

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Exhibit III.2. Intervention flow diagram
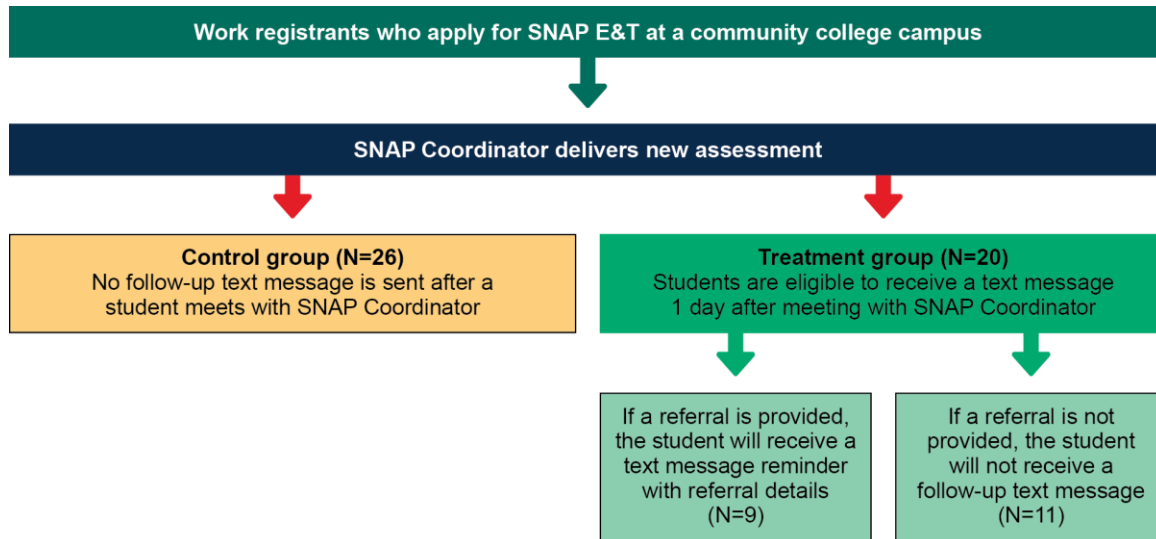
Note: Red arrows indicate points of random assignment.

C.   Evaluation design

Mathematica conducted an RCT to estimate the impact of a behaviorally informed text message on outcomes including support service receipt, reported barriers to employment and program completion, and ongoing participation in SNAP E&T. The experimental component of the evaluation was restricted to the subset of students in the intervention who received a referral to support services from their SNAP E&T Coordinator.

The evaluation also included an implementation study that assessed the intervention's design and administration, the challenges encountered and solutions to address them, and SNAP participants' experience with the intervention.

Mathematica collected and analyzed several types of data to support the evaluation:

1. **Intervention tracking data** measure the types of referrals made by SNAP E&T Coordinators.

2. **SNAP E&T RCE participant survey data** describe SNAP participant experiences with the intervention and SNAP E&T services. The survey was given to all individuals in the intervention, including those in both the treatment and control groups.

3. **Implementation data** describe staff and SNAP participant experiences with the interventions, lessons learned, and factors that facilitated or hindered successful implementation. Mathematica collected implementation data through staff interviews and SNAP participant in-depth interviews.

Additional detail on the data collected and evaluation methodology is available in the Technical Supplement to the SNAP E&T RCE final reports.

D.   Characteristics of individuals in the analysis

Exhibit III.3 shows the key characteristics of the 46 students in the analysis. Nearly all students were women (97 percent), and half had children in the household (50 percent). Six percent did not have a high school diploma or equivalent education, and 43 percent were employed at a point in time three months prior to the survey. Forty-two percent of students identified as White, and 39 percent identified as Black or African American. Forty-seven percent were of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.

Exhibit III.3. Baseline characteristics of individuals in the analysis

97% Female	**6%** Without a high school diploma
50% Living with children	**43%** Employed prior to intervention
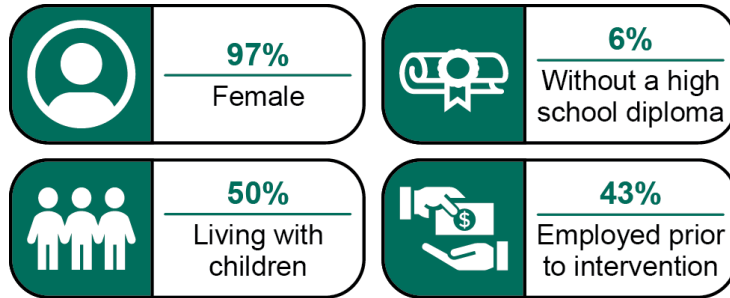
Source: SNAP E&T RCE participant survey.
Note: See Technical Supplement for additional characteristics.

IV.   Findings

A.   Impact evaluation

Text messages did not have an impact on referral take-up and ongoing E&T participation. Among the 16 students who received a referral to support services, rates of referral take-up and ongoing enrollment in SNAP E&T were similar between the treatment group (students who received a text message reminder) and the control group (students who did not receive a text message). One of 9 treatment group members reported receiving services from the organization they were referred to, compared to 2 of 7 control group members (Exhibit IV.1 and Appendix Table C.1a).

When asked whether they were still enrolled in SNAP E&T at the time of the participant survey (approximately one to two months after being randomly assigned), 7 of the 9 treatment group members reported being enrolled, compared to 5 of the 7 control group members (Exhibit IV.1).

According to tracking information shared by CT State, SNAP E&T Coordinators most often referred students to support services related to academic readiness (31 percent), followed by services related to computer

Exhibit IV.1. Outcomes among text treatment and control groups
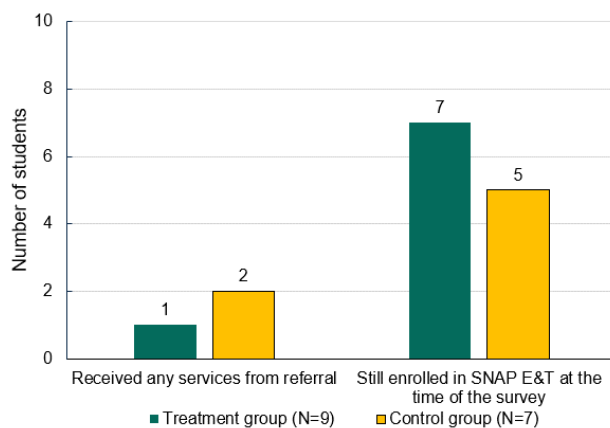
Source: SNAP E&T RCE participant survey.

skills or technology access (19 percent), disability services (13 percent), and food insecurity (13 percent; Technical Supplement Table B.2). According to survey results, after engaging in the intervention, treatment and control group members reported ongoing barriers to participating in SNAP E&T including a lack of childcare, transportation, stable housing, and access to technology needed for classes. However, there were no meaningful differences between the treatment and control group members in the prevalence of these barriers reported after receiving a referral to support services (Appendix Table C.1b).

B.   Implementation evaluation

The implementation evaluation assessed the intervention's design and administration, the challenges encountered and solutions to address them, and SNAP participants' experience.

1.   Factors that facilitated or hindered successful implementation

SNAP E&T Coordinators reported that participating in the study and the LI[2] process provided an opportunity to discuss challenges and identify needs specific to the SNAP E&T program at each campus; CT State leadership felt that it was important for SNAP E&T Coordinators to participate in the evaluation. The project also created an opportunity for the SNAP E&T Coordinators to connect as a group. One SNAP E&T Coordinator said, "[It was] a nice, open forum to discuss many of the challenges and then find out from other people that some of them were having similar ones… I thought it was really, really beneficial to understand where everybody else was. Any opportunity that we have to connect as Coordinators, I think is very, very important." SNAP E&T Coordinators also appreciated the training, resources, and support provided throughout the intervention.

The variation in SNAP E&T program enrollment and individual case management approaches posed a challenge to implementing the intervention consistently, as each SNAP E&T Coordinator needed to understand the intervention procedures and apply them within the context of their own processes. The SNAP E&T program does not have a standard application, assessment, and case management process across campuses. One of CT State's initial goals after the merger to a unified, statewide system was to standardize case management processes through participation in the project. During the intervention, the SNAP E&T enrollment process (including the availability and timing of E&T course offerings) continued to vary by campus as the colleges navigated the administrative changes resulting from the merger to CT State. SNAP E&T Coordinators use a range of case management strategies, including their approaches to assessment. Mathematica provided training and ad-hoc technical assistance to mitigate some of these challenges, but implementation varied.

The intervention did not always align with enrollment processes in practice. Students express interest in the SNAP E&T program by contacting a SNAP E&T Coordinator, who then shares information about next steps to enroll in a SNAP E&T course. Depending on individual interests and the availability of course offerings, SNAP E&T Coordinators may have an initial conversation with a student weeks or months before a student formally applies to the program and enrolls. This dynamic resulted in a longer period than anticipated between a student's first contact with the SNAP E&T program and their enrollment in SNAP E&T, including verification of eligibility, enrollment in the study, and assessment.

The majority of students enroll in SNAP E&T at the beginning of the fall or spring semester. When the intervention began in February 2024, many students had already completed their initial meeting and

assessment with a SNAP E&T Coordinator. The seven-month delay in the intervention start date hindered implementation and resulted in much fewer students participating in the intervention than anticipated. Some SNAP E&T Coordinators reported that they were not able to implement the intervention due to limited interactions with students throughout the spring.

SNAP E&T Coordinators had limited capacity and found it challenging to implement the intervention in addition to their regular duties. SNAP E&T Coordinators reported that the data collection procedures associated with the intervention, such as entering students' contact and referral information into a central location, were time-consuming and difficult to incorporate into their typical workflows. Some SNAP E&T Coordinators reported that they did not implement the intervention consistently or were unable to prioritize participation in the study due to their existing workload. Some worked part-time or worked with other programs in addition to SNAP E&T, further limiting their capacity to dedicate time to the intervention.

SNAP E&T Coordinators also reported that they encountered students who declined to participate in the study. They said that some found the consent form overwhelming and felt that students might be hesitant to provide their personal information. One Coordinator reported that students did not always understand how their information would be used by the study, and another said that some students were wary of scams and therefore declined to provide their contact information.

2.   SNAP participant experience

Students who participated in the study shared their experiences through in-depth interviews with Mathematica staff. Mathematica conducted 27 in-depth interviews with students from 6 community college campuses. Students shared their experiences with the intervention and with the SNAP E&T program overall. A participant survey was available to all individuals in the intervention. Thirty-seven participants completed the survey, including 16 students who received a referral to support services (see Appendix Table C.1b).

Students reported varied experiences with case management. Students shared their experiences with case management in the SNAP E&T program, including the frequency and mode of communication with SNAP E&T Coordinators, and their perceptions of how Coordinators support students in the program. Students differed in how often they met with their SNAP E&T Coordinator; some met weekly with the Coordinator at their campus, while others reported that they met only once or as needed. Case management meetings took place over the phone, by email, and in-person. Many students were satisfied with the level of communication they had with SNAP E&T Coordinators, while others said they could have used more support. Most students surveyed (62 percent) reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the career planning and job placement services available.

/////////////////////

"Our first conversation was, what I wanted, what did I expect out of the program? What do I expect to achieve? Do I plan on moving up? What are my goals? So, she can at least guide me in what they have to offer and what she would recommend for me as an advisor, as a continuing education advisor."

— SNAP E&T participant

Students found that SNAP E&T Coordinators provided helpful information about available programs, support services, best practices for academic success, and SNAP. Coordinators encouraged students to participate in the program and assured them that they would provide support as needed. However, the role a SNAP E&T Coordinator plays in a student's experience with SNAP E&T can vary, and students in the intervention had different preferences about the ideal frequency of communication with their Coordinator and the level of support they felt they needed. Students reported that they discussed their goals, background, and interest in the program during the initial case management meeting with SNAP E&T Coordinators; however, some said that the SNAP E&T Coordinator did not help them determine which program or course to sign up for. Only 43 percent of students surveyed reported that they were satisfied with the support services available through SNAP E&T.

Most students had a positive experience with SNAP E&T. Students reported that the SNAP E&T program equipped them with useful skills and prepared them for employment, often in a new industry. Students appreciated that the program offered a variety of classes they could choose from and that the colleges helped pay for tuition and books. Most students surveyed (77 percent) reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the class location and times, and 63 percent were satisfied or very satisfied with the online course options. One student said about the program, "They [gave] me a lot more confidence and wanting to branch out and have another career, more confidence in going back to school." Others reported that they enjoyed their classes, teachers, and other students.

> "It [SNAP E&T] gave me more faith in myself. So, it's the first time I've ever done something and not gotten freaked out and made myself fail. So, I'm proud of me. "
>
> — SNAP E&T participant

Students generally approved of receiving a reminder text message. Some students shared that they preferred to receive text messages over emails. However, the timing of reminder text messages could be adjusted. One student suggested they would prefer to receive the message two or three days after the referral was made, as opposed to the next day.

Students reported positive experiences with the Stepping Stones assessment. Based on survey data, the majority of students agreed or strongly agreed that the assessment helped them better understand their own needs or goals (76 percent), and they felt motivated to focus on their needs and goals after discussing the assessment with their SNAP E&T Coordinator (89 percent).

V.   Lessons Learned

The goal of the evaluation was to measure the impacts of the intervention on student outcomes, including barriers to program completion and employment, receipt of support services, and SNAP E&T course and program completion. CT State designed the intervention to address challenges in case management across the colleges. Despite limited findings about the impact of text message reminders, CT State staff and students discussed successful aspects of the intervention. Lessons learned from the evaluation include strengths that can be built upon, changes that would be required to scale or replicate the intervention, and resources needed to continue implementation.

A.   What worked and can be built upon?

Several aspects of the intervention were promising and could be built upon. SNAP E&T Coordinators found that the *Stepping Stones to College Success* assessment was a helpful tool in guiding their conversations with students and helping identify areas where additional support could facilitate success in the program. While some Coordinators reported that they were asking similar questions before using the new tool, they found it to be consistent with the information needed to understand a student's individual barriers and help to address them. Coordinators also used the assessment tool in different ways – some asked students to complete the form on their own, while others administered it verbally – indicating a degree of flexibility that could allow CT State to standardize some of its case management or assessment processes across colleges, while still allowing SNAP E&T Coordinators to maintain their individual styles.

CT State staff also thought that text message reminders could be effective within the SNAP E&T program in certain scenarios. Text messages could focus on steps to enroll in SNAP E&T or program requirements, such as attending orientation or completing paperwork, rather than (or in addition to) referrals to support services. Using text message reminders within the program could make it easier for SNAP E&T Coordinators to share information or communicate directly with students.

Finally, SNAP E&T Coordinators are generally invested in students' engagement with the SNAP E&T program and in helping them participate in the program successfully. Most SNAP E&T Coordinators shared aspects of their role that they found to be meaningful, such as working with a diverse group of people, helping students navigate challenges and find employment, and supporting students on their educational journeys.

B.   Changes needed for replicating the intervention and expanding its scale

The level of effort required during the intervention was a challenge for SNAP E&T Coordinators; CT State would need to determine how they could further streamline the intervention procedures and incorporate them into Coordinators' regular duties. To expand the use of text messages in the SNAP E&T program, CT State would need to identify scenarios in which text messages could be most helpful for students and/or Coordinators, as well as the most effective time frame in which to send text message reminders (for example, two or three days after a case management appointment, or the day before a program deadline).

To standardize the use of the *Stepping Stones to College Success* assessment and incorporate the tool in regular case management processes, CT State would need to provide additional training for staff on how to administer the tool, including training for new staff as part of their onboarding. The colleges would also need to determine how to incorporate the tool into current application and intake processes at each individual campus, or into a standardized application, enrollment, and assessment process.

C.   Resources participating campuses would need to continue the changes made through the intervention

To continue or expand the use of text messages in the SNAP E&T program, CT State would need to invest in the texting platform. It would cost about $10,000 to $12,000 per year for ongoing use. CT State would need to support any costs for maintenance or changes they elected to make. Alternatively, they could use

a different tool available to the community colleges. CT State would also need to invest in training for staff members designated to use the program, including any new staff during onboarding.

The primary resource needed to continue or expand the intervention would be an increase in staff capacity. Additional staff could help distribute the workload needed to continue or expand the intervention. The role of SNAP E&T Coordinators (including those who currently work part-time) could be expanded. Certain staff could be dedicated to implementation and maintenance of the text message platform.

Appendix A. New Assessment Tool

CT STATE
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

SNAP EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

| MY NAME | | ID # | | DATE | |
| COACH/ COORDINATOR NAME | | COLLEGE NAME | | | |

Stepping Stones to College Success

Take some time to reflect on the following topic areas related to your college success. Where would you say you are currently at each of these areas? Which area jumps out at you as the most important for setting a goal today?

			NEED HELP	ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT	MAKING PROGRESS	CONFIDENT & GOOD TO GO	
BASIC NEEDS	Childcare ▶	I have no childcare plan for when I am in class.	○	○	○	○	I have reliable childcare and a reliable backup plan.
	Transportation ▶	I have no transportation to class.	○	○	○	○	I have reliable transportation to class and a backup plan.
	Food insecurity ▶	I need support to have enough food.	○	○	○	○	I don't need support to have enough food.
	Housing ▶	I don't have stable housing.	○	○	○	○	I have stable housing.
	Money management ▶	I often struggle to manage my money.	○	○	○	○	I know how to manage my money.
HEALTH AND WELLNESS	Personal well-being ▶	My personal well-being needs my attention.	○	○	○	○	I'm doing well and fully able to attend classes.
	Family well-being ▶	My family challenges get in the way of my progress.	○	○	○	○	My family is doing well and supports me.
	Social support ▶	I have no social support, or my network is not supportive of me attending school.	○	○	○	○	I have consistent and effective social support.
SCHOOL READINESS	Academic readiness ▶	I don't feel ready to start my class.	○	○	○	○	I feel ready to start my class.
	Access to technology ▶	I don't have access to a computer or the internet.	○	○	○	○	I have access to the technology I need for class.
	Computer skills ▶	I don't feel comfortable or know how to use a computer for my class.	○	○	○	○	I feel comfortable and have the skills to confidently use a computer for class.
	Time management ▶	I don't know how to manage my time to complete my classwork.	○	○	○	○	I have the time management skills I need to complete my classwork.
CAREER PLANNING	Deciding on a career ▶	I'm not sure what career I want.	○	○	○	○	I know what career I want.
	Resume and cover letter ▶	I don't have a resume or cover letter.	○	○	○	○	I have an updated resume and cover letter.
	Interview skills ▶	I don't have the confidence or skills to interview for a job.	○	○	○	○	I feel confident and am ready to interview for a job.
	Education and training ▶	I don't have the education or training I need to get the job I want.	○	○	○	○	I have completed the education or training needed to get the job I want.
	Credentials ▶	I don't have the professional certificates or credentials I need to get the job I want.	○	○	○	○	I have the professional certificates or credentials I need to get the job I want.

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Appendix B.

Text Message Language

Text message language:

"[Student NAME], this is [SNAP Coordinator NAME], your [SNAP Coach or SNAP Coordinator]. By meeting with me to discuss resources and services you need, you have already started on the path to success at [Name of college]. Take the next step toward meeting your goals by reaching out to [Referral Partner]. Contact [them or contact person name] at [telephone/email] or visit them at [physical address] to start getting the support we discussed!"

Appendix C.

Supplemental Tables

Table C.1a. Outcomes among referral reminder text treatment and control groups

	Treatment group	Control group	Difference
Outcome			
Received any services from referral	11.1	28.6	-17.5
Barriers to employment			
Reported at least one barrier to employment	55.6	42.9	12.7
Reported two or more barriers to employment	33.3	14.3	19.0
Enrolled in classes through SNAP E&T at the time of the survey	83.3	63.2	20.1
Sample size	9	7	16

Source: SNAP E&T RCE participant survey.

Note: All values are percentages unless otherwise noted.

Table C.1b. Reported barriers to employment among referral reminder text treatment and control group

	Treatment group	Control group	Difference
Reported barrier to employment			
Does not have childcare	0.0	33.3	-33.3
Does not have a car	11.1	0.0	11.1
Not living in stable housing	11.1	0.0	11.1
Does not have documents or valid forms of identification needed for employment	0.0	0.0	0.0
Does not feel prepared for classes	11.1	0.0	11.1
Does not have access to technology needed for classes	11.1	14.3	-3.2
Does not have basic computer skills needed for classes	11.1	0.0	11.1
"Fair" or "poor" self-reported health	11.1	28.6	-17.5
Reported having a felony that would prevent them from getting a job	0.0	0.0	0.0
Reported other barriers[a]	25.0	0.0	25.0
Sample size	9	7	16

Source: SNAP E&T RCE participant survey.

Note: All values are percentages unless otherwise noted.

[a] Other barriers reported included language barriers and specific disabilities or health issues.