Who We Are

WE REPRESENT

The cabinet-level leadership of state and local health and human services agencies and the subject matter experts that help execute their missions.
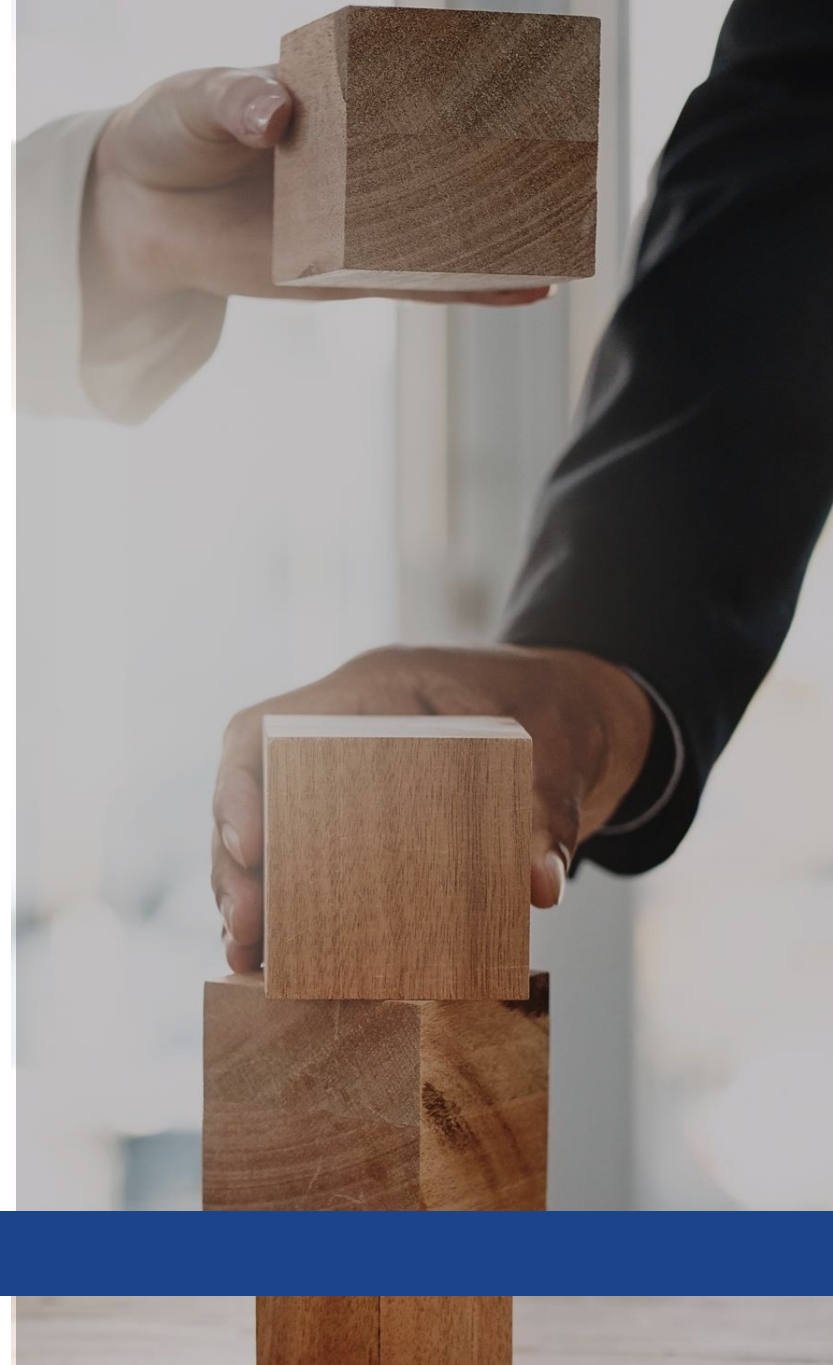
MEMBER EXPERTISE

Our members administer and align services that build resilience and bolster family well-being through access to food, health care, employment, child care, and other key building blocks. They are also leading experts in performance measurement and data analysis, IT systems, workforce development and training, and the legal dimensions of the health human services field.

WE SEEK TO

Influence modern policies and practices, help our members *build* capacity for their teams, and *connect* them to other human-serving organizations and policymakers.
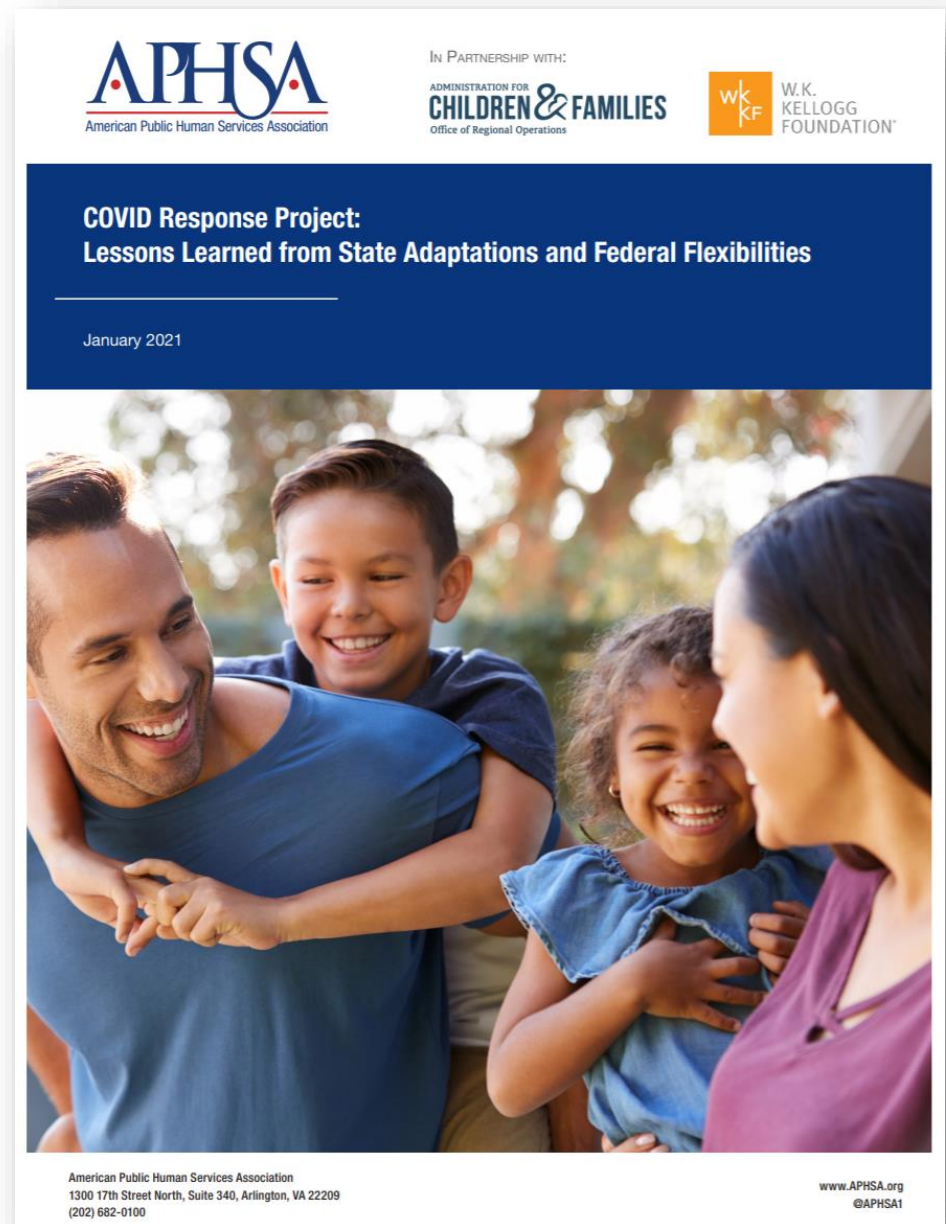
We build well-being from the ground up.

Lessons Learned from State Adaptations and Federal Flexibilities

Washington DC Metro Area

➢ Use of Waivers and Other Flexibilities

➢ *Shift to Virtual Services*

➢ Partnerships and Whole Family Approaches

➢ Resiliency and Emergency Planning

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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES
Office of Regional Operations

W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION

COVID Response Project:
Lessons Learned from State Adaptations and Federal Flexibilities

January 2021

American Public Human Services Association
1300 17th Street North, Suite 340, Arlington, VA 22209
(202) 682-0100

www.APHSA.org
@APHSA1

II. Shift to Virtual Services

This transformation involved both…

- Significant investment in the *tools and infrastructure* used to deliver services (VPN, laptops, etc.), and
- A *cultural shift* in the norms and organizational practices followed by state and local agencies (telework, virtual case work, etc.).

What's worked well…

- Enhanced efficiency by moving to document upload via cellphone & other such benefits,
- Enhanced live customer support (via chatbot, phone centers, etc.), and
- Reduced travel time for workers meant more time to spend virtually with families.

What needs enhancement…

- Access to broadband,
- Lack of digital literacy in communities, and
- Determining the efficacy and risk of moving certain services to virtual.

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Virtual Trends

Child Welfare

- Virtual visitations and home inspections
- Virtual court hearings
- Purchase of cell phones and laptops for families, youth, and birth parents
- Modification of IV-E prevention services for a virtual environment

TANF

- Significant uptick in virtual employment and training services
- Modifications to interviews
- Adjustments to Work Participation Rate requirements

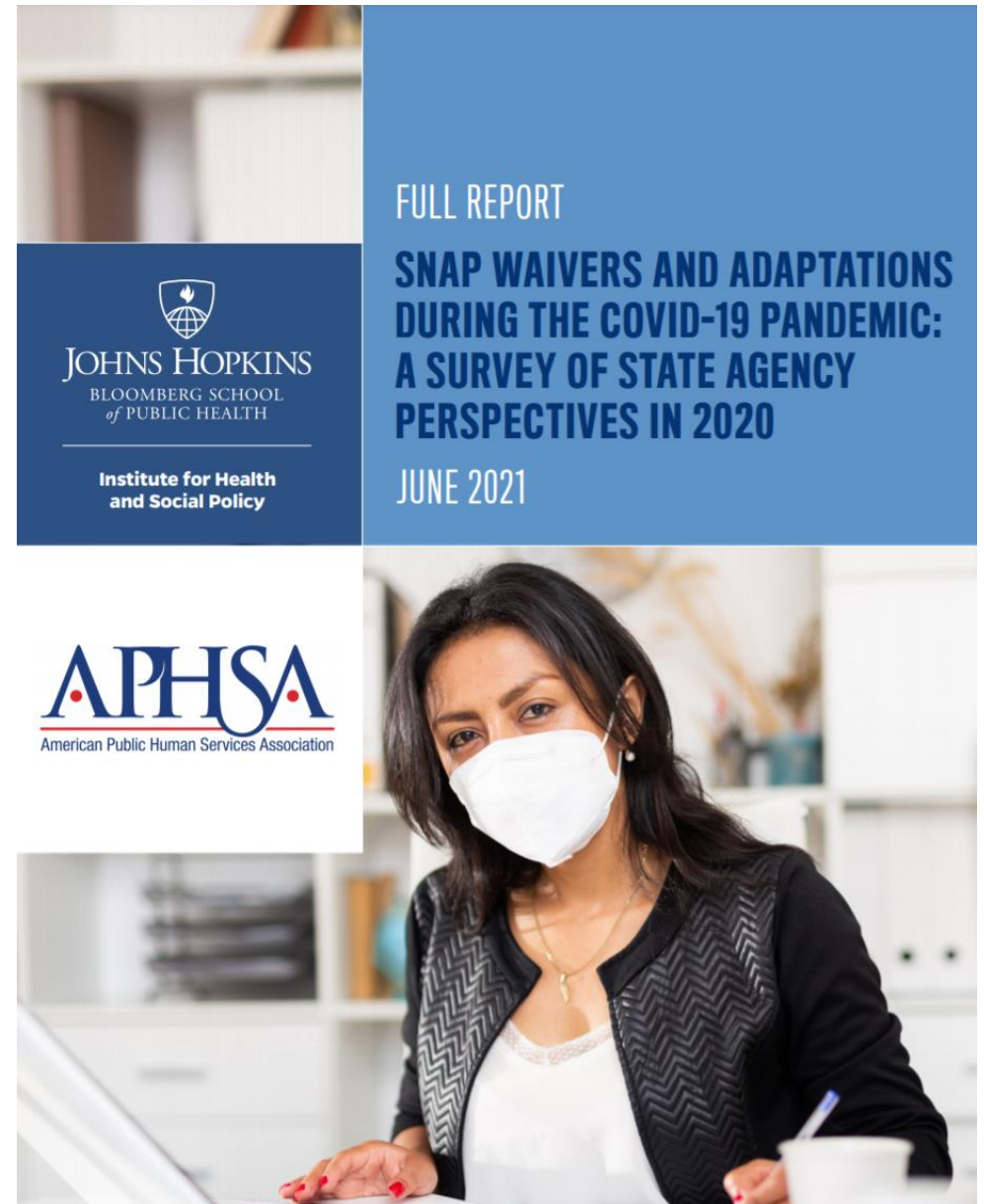## Shift to Virtual Services: Mississippi

At the onset of the pandemic, all of Mississippi's 82 county offices shut down. Leadership quickly pivoted to move Department of Human Services (MDHS) staff to remote work, procuring more than 400 cell phones for staff to enable them to work outside the office and conduct phone interviews for people applying for benefits. The state IT team worked to connect their 35-year-old eligibility system to the Cloud so that staff could get remote access to their eligibility and case management system. The state also shifted to a unified case management model where SNAP staff from any county could help process incoming applications. This meant that when one county had a surge in applications, staff from surrounding counties could help support that workload. At one point in time, the state's adapted virtual services operations allowed MDHS staff to process more than 60,000 new SNAP applications in a single month (April 2020).

SNAP Waivers and Adaptations During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Survey of State Agency Perspectives in 2020

Full Report

Executive Summary

➢ Certification Periods and Interview Adjustments

➢ Application Support and Case Resolution

➢ Food Assistance and Food Purchasing

➢ Communications and Community Engagement

Washington DC Metro Area

FULL REPORT

SNAP WAIVERS AND ADAPTATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A SURVEY OF STATE AGENCY PERSPECTIVES IN 2020

JUNE 2021

JOHNS HOPKINS
BLOOMBERG SCHOOL
of PUBLIC HEALTH

Institute for Health and Social Policy

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Methods of SNAP Case Processing

EXHIBIT 2.4.1. Options Offered Pre-Pandemic and Added or Expanded During the Pandemic to Support Core Case Functions (N=43)

Option to support case functions	Available pre-pandemic n (%)	Added n (%)	Expanded n (%)
Telephone			
Applications	17 (40%)	6 (14%)	1 (2%)
Recertifications	17 (40%)	6 (14%)	0 (0%)
Periodic reports	9 (21%)	2 (5%)	0 (0%)
Interview scheduling	29 (67%)	0 (0%)	3 (7%)
Overpayment claims	4 (9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Fair hearings	29 (67%)	3 (7%)	3 (7%)
Online			
Applications	38 (88%)	2 (5%)	7 (16%)
Recertifications	36 (84%)	1 (2%)	5 (12%)
Periodic reports	19 (44%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)
Document submission	35 (81%)	3 (7%)	5 (12%)
Interview scheduling	6 (14%)	2 (5%)	1 (2%)
Overpayment claims	5 (12%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
Fair hearings	11 (26%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
Mobile-Friendly			
Applications	14 (33%)	1 (2%)	2 (5%)
Recertifications	13 (30%)	1 (2%)	2 (5%)
Periodic reports	7 (16%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)
Document submission	15 (35%)	2 (5%)	3 (7%)
Interview scheduling	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	(0%)

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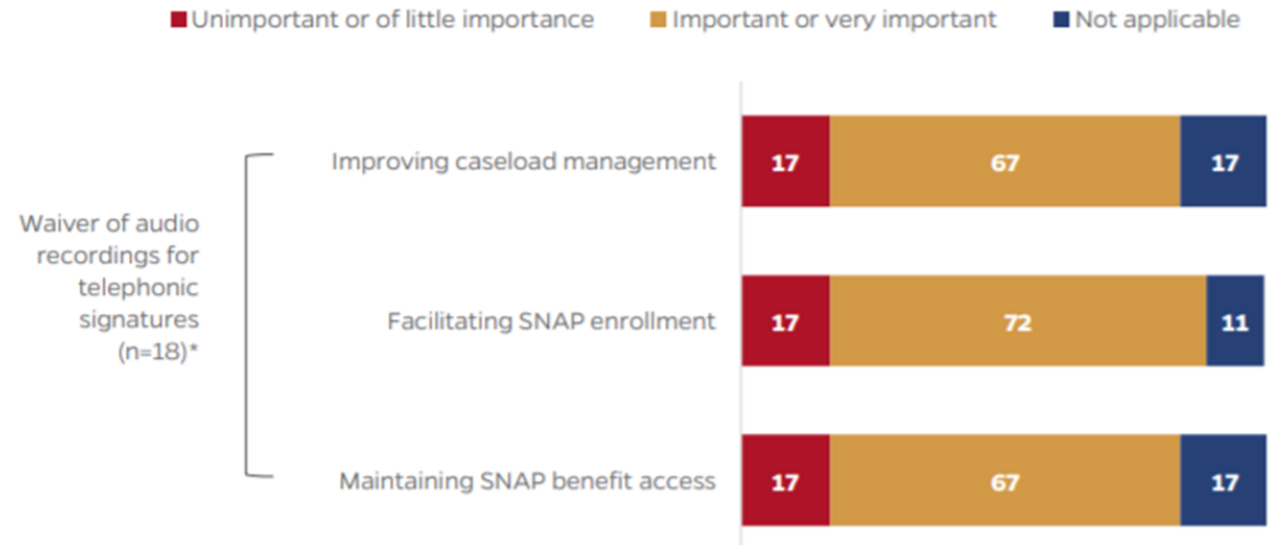
SNAP Online Purchasing

EXHIBIT 3.2.4. Perceptions of Client Barriers to Utilizing Online Purchasing
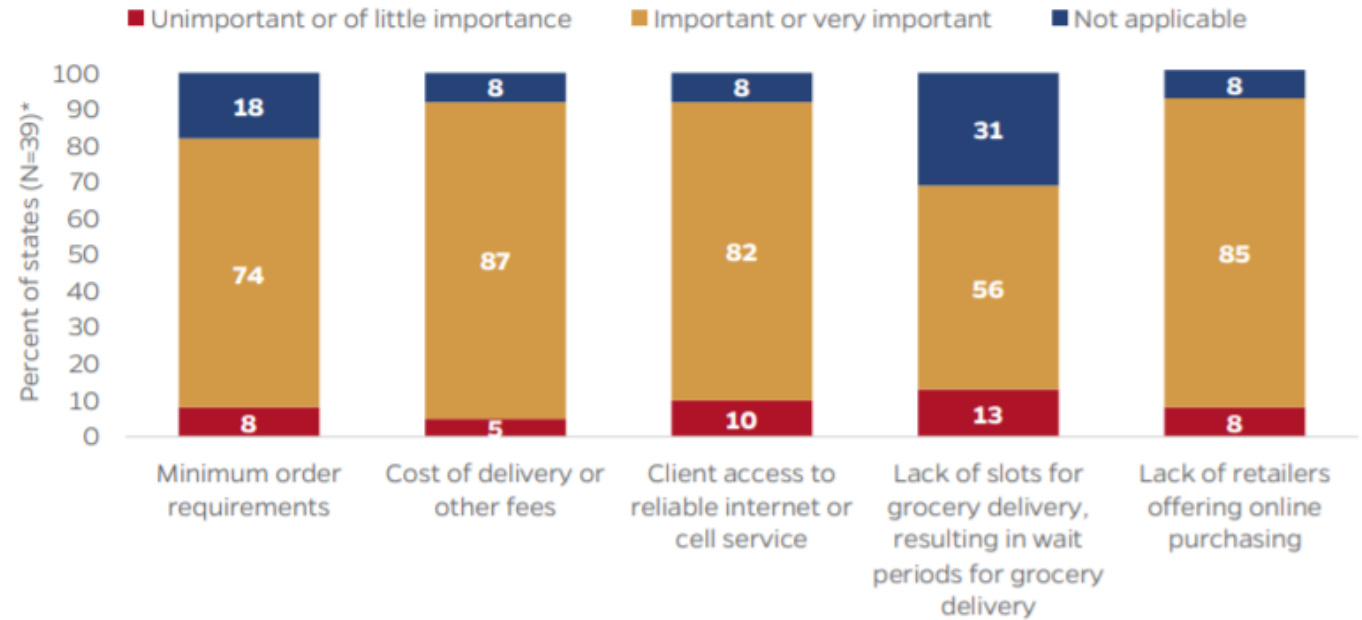
Legend:
- Unimportant or of little importance
- Important or very important
- Not applicable

Percent of states (N=39)*

Barrier	Unimportant or of little importance	Important or very important	Not applicable
Minimum order requirements	8	74	18
Cost of delivery or other fees	5	87	8
Client access to reliable internet or cell service	10	82	8
Lack of slots for grocery delivery, resulting in wait periods for grocery delivery	13	56	31
Lack of retailers offering online purchasing	8	85	8

SNAP-Education

EXHIBIT 4.3.1. Proportion of States That Moved SNAP-Ed Programming Online During the Pandemic (N=40)*

Moved some
55%

Moved all
23%

Did not move any programming online
23%
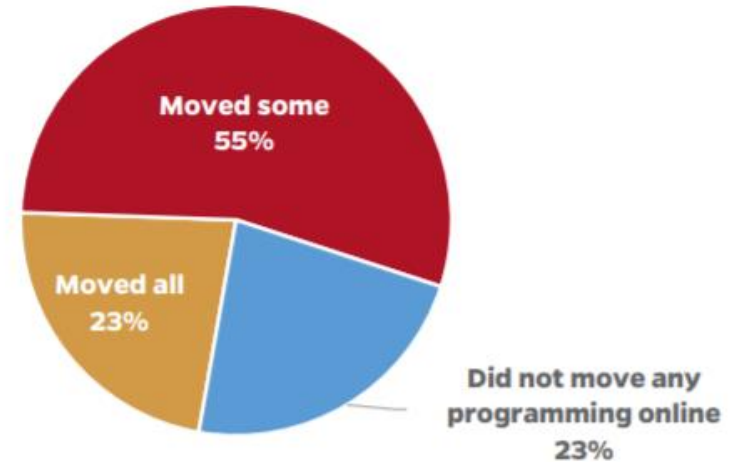
*States missing responses not included in denominator (n=2).
Note: Pie chart does not sum to 100% due to rounding.

"Many SNAP-Ed agencies did not actively use social media prior to the pandemic, so there was a significant transition, particularly in building a following with the qualifying SNAP-Ed audience."
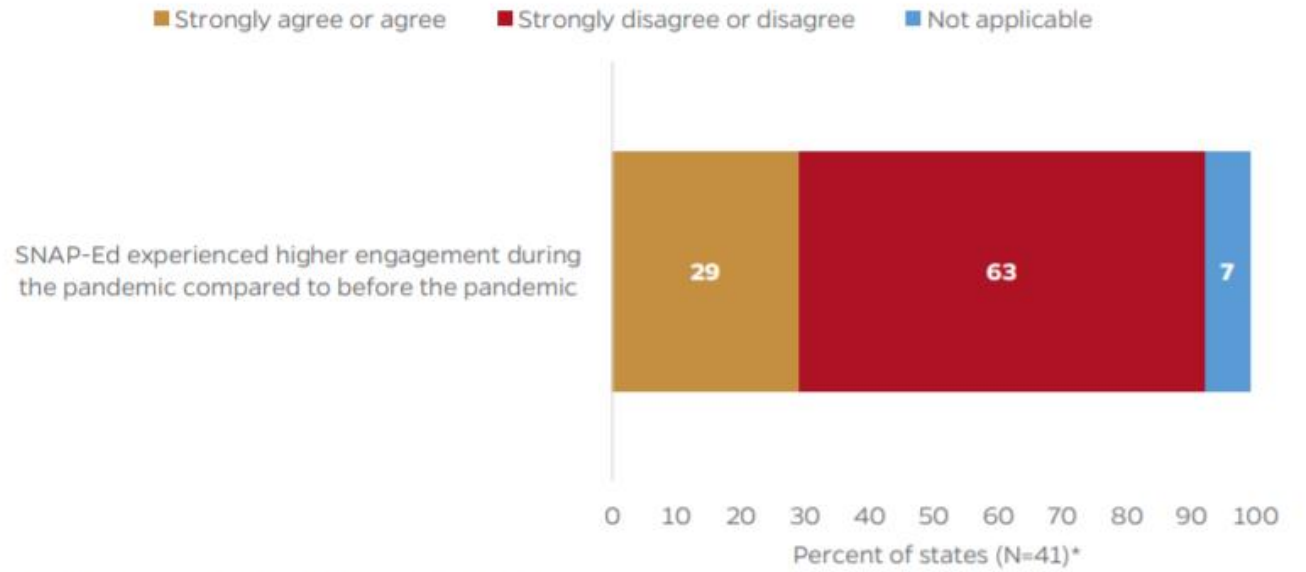
-State Survey Respondent

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SNAP-Education

EXHIBIT 4.3.4. Agreement That SNAP-Ed Experienced Higher Engagement During the Pandemic Compared to Prior to the Pandemic

■ Strongly agree or agree   ■ Strongly disagree or disagree   ■ Not applicable

SNAP-Ed experienced higher engagement during the pandemic compared to before the pandemic

| 29 | 63 | 7 |

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Percent of states (N=41)*

*States missing response not included in denominator (n=2).
Note: Bar does not sum to 100% due to rounding.

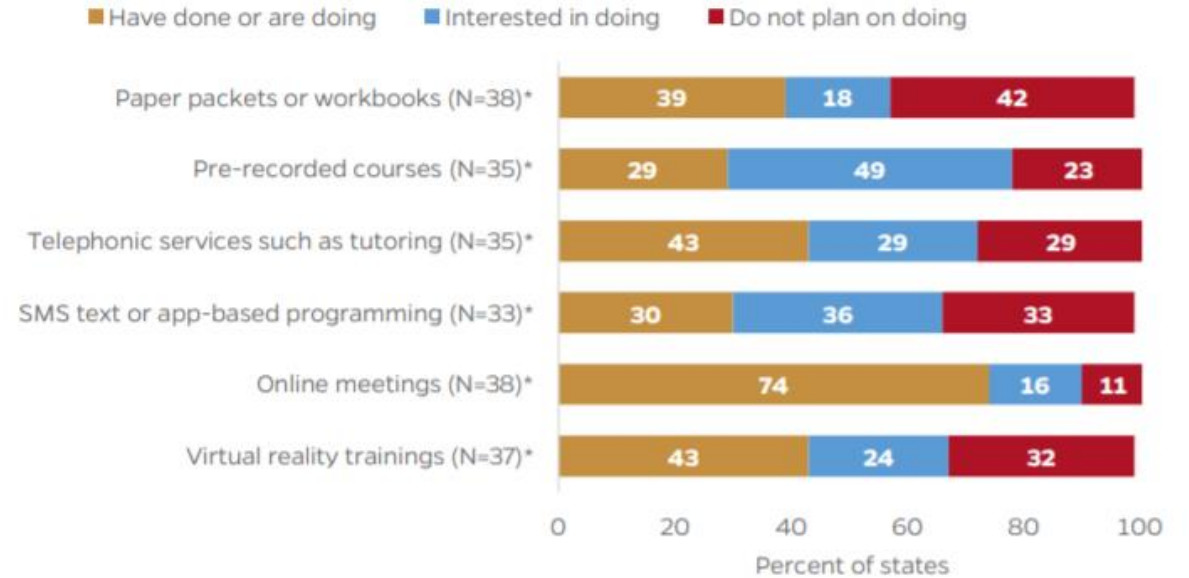# SNAP Employment & Training

EXHIBIT 4.4.3. Resources Used by States During the Pandemic to Address the Need for Remote SNAP E&T Services

Legend: ■ Have done or are doing ■ Interested in doing ■ Do not plan on doing

Resource	Have done or are doing	Interested in doing	Do not plan on doing
Paper packets or workbooks (N=38)*	39	18	42
Pre-recorded courses (N=35)*	29	49	23
Telephonic services such as tutoring (N=35)*	43	29	29
SMS text or app-based programming (N=33)*	30	36	33
Online meetings (N=38)*	74	16	11
Virtual reality trainings (N=37)*	43	24	32

Percent of states (0, 20, 40, 60, 80, 100)

*States missing responses not included in denominator (n=5 for paper packets or workbooks, n=8 for pre-recorded courses, n=8 for telephonic services such as tutoring, n=10 for SMS text or app-based programming, n=5 for online meetings, and n=6 for virtual reality trainings).

Note: Other resources included (1) virtual job fairs; (2) remote case management; (3) job readiness sessions; (4) occupational training; or (5) education. Not all bars sum to 100% due to rounding.
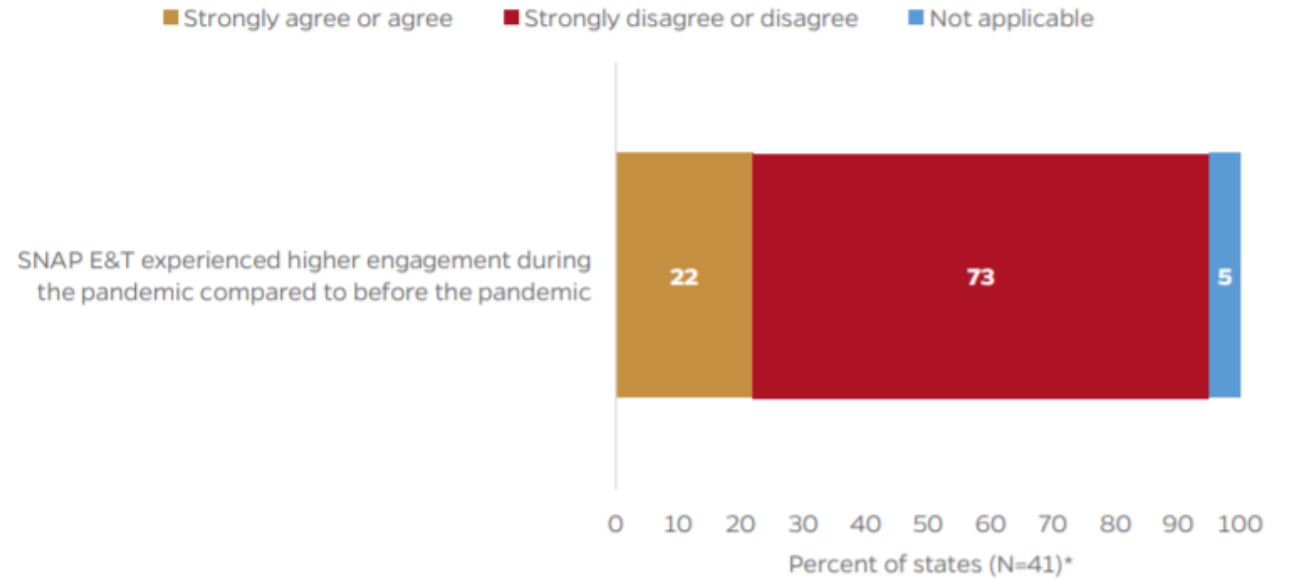
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SNAP Employment & Training

EXHIBIT 4.4.4. Agreement That SNAP E&T Experienced Higher Engagement During the Pandemic Compared to Before the Pandemic

- ■ Strongly agree or agree
- ■ Strongly disagree or disagree
- ■ Not applicable

SNAP E&T experienced higher engagement during the pandemic compared to before the pandemic: 22 | 73 | 5

Percent of states (N=41)*

*States missing response not included in denominator (n=2).

What's Next

- Further modernization to support virtual **application and case management functions**

- Additional research and technical assistance in virtual **education and training services** as one of many paths to client engagement

- Increased understanding of how **adapting evidence-based practices** to virtual services impacts fidelity

- Modernized food purchasing through expanded **SNAP online purchasing and mobile EBT**

- **Shifting case management models and IT investments** to ensure resiliency of human services systems

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Questions?

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