

HIA on SNAP and Sugar Sweetened Beverages



Jess Lynch
September 24, 2013



Background on the policy issue

- For 3 consecutive years, bills introduced in Illinois General Assembly that propose eliminating sugar sweetened beverages (SSBs) from SNAP
- Complex policy making context involving USDA, IL General Assembly, IL Dept. of Human Services
 - USDA must grant a waiver for any changes to SNAP-eligible products
- Active policy discussion in other states and federally

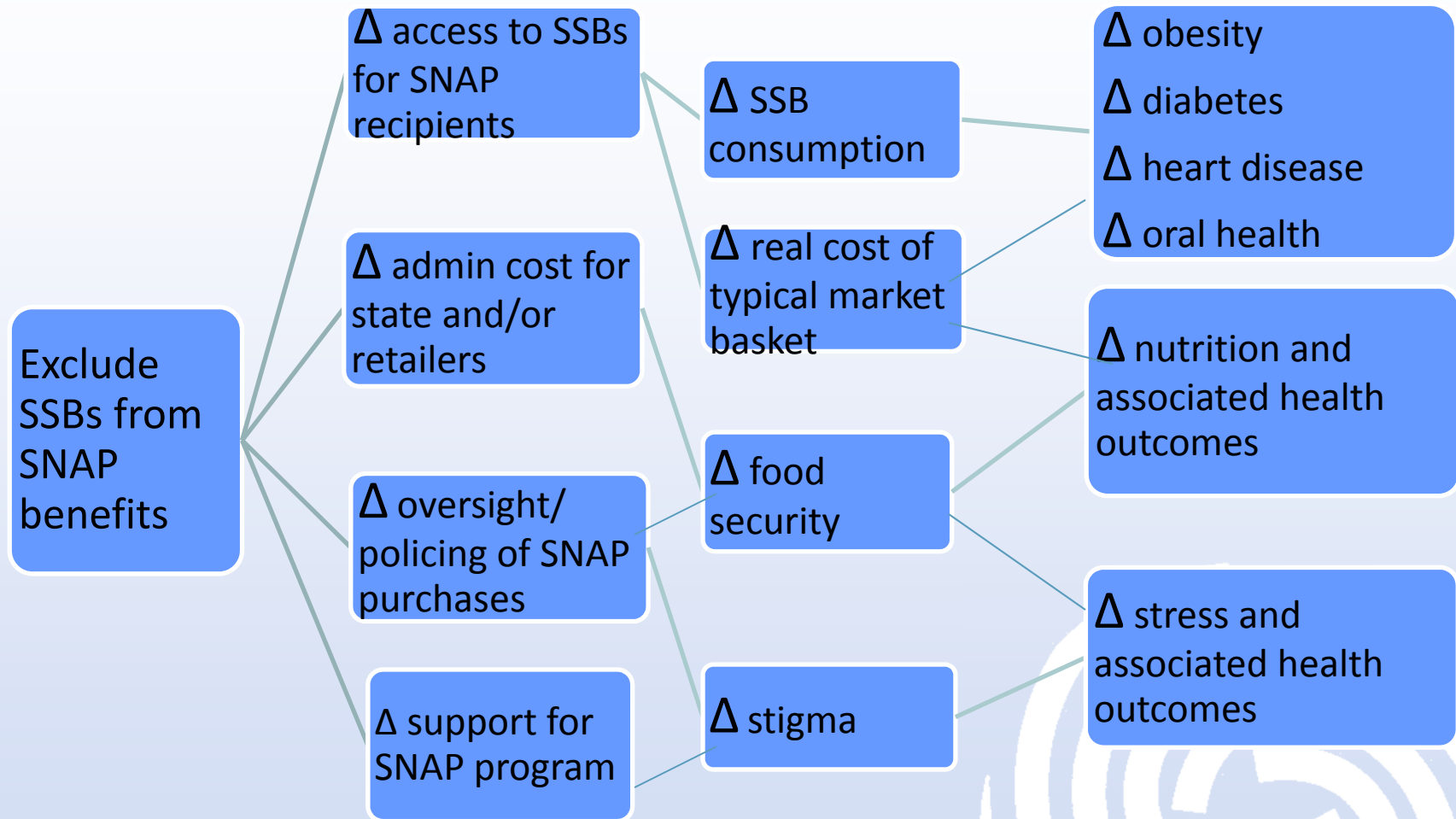
Screening

- Range of opinions on SNAP and SSBs among IPHI's partners and allies in obesity prevention and food security
- Little existing assessment of potential health impacts
- In denial of previous waiver requests by NY and MN, USDA cited concerns about administrative logistics, confusion and stigma as well as preference for incentive-based approaches

Stakeholder Engagement in HIA

- Advisory Group included:
experts in obesity, oral health, food security, HIA;
statewide retailer associations, representatives from
state agencies
- Focus groups with SNAP participants
- Interviews with grocers

Health pathways



Key Findings

- Reducing consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages would have positive health effects for consumers, but it is **likely that SNAP participants would continue to purchase such beverages with cash**, making a stand-alone ban an ineffective strategy for reducing sugar-sweetened beverage consumption and improving health among program participants.

Key Findings

- SNAP participants (and the population overall) lack knowledge about the health risks of sugar-sweetened beverages
- SNAP participants frequently encounter significant barriers to purchasing healthy foods and beverages
- Policies to eliminate sugary drinks from SNAP purchases are more likely to improve nutritional intake and reduce SSB consumption if combined with incentives to purchase healthier foods and a strong educational component.

Conclusions

- Develop a small pilot initiative that would allow choice between continuing with the current program or joining the pilot, which restricts beverage purchases, offers increased SNAP benefits as an incentive, and expands nutrition education
- Increase education about the health effects of drinking SSBs, particularly fruit drinks & sports drinks
- Since the consumption of sugary drinks is high across the whole US population, implement policies & interventions that apply to everyone universally, such as an excise tax

Conclusions

- Fund SNAP at a level that ensures nutritious food is affordable to low-income households.
- Engage participants in designing policies to improve the nutritional value of the SNAP program.
- Fund evaluation of any implemented waivers including further investigation into the stigma and stress that SNAP participants face as changes are made to the program, and work to ensure that recent gains made in lessening the stigma—as a result of the now widespread use of electronic benefit transfers—are not reversed.

Impact on Decision-Making

- Still an open question... in the process of finalizing this HIA and plan to release this Fall

Lessons learned from this HIA

- The HIA was a valuable way to bring together stakeholders with different positions, and helped to bridge some of the divide between obesity and food security advocates in Illinois on this issue.
- It is valuable to engage a broad set of stakeholders even though some may not sign on to the findings and recommendations

Lessons learned from this HIA

- SNAP participants shared very important insights; need to all ways strive for more effective and meaningful ways to engage affected populations in state and federal HIAs... and share what works
- HIA practice in the realm of state and federal policy is still evolving – opportunities for shaping best practices



Thank you!

Jess Lynch

Jessica.Lynch@iphionline.org

312-850-4744

