

**REPORT OF THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL SERVICES**

**Virginia Restaurant Meals
Program (Chapter 321, 2025)**

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



SENATE DOCUMENT NO. 3

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
RICHMOND
2026**



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Office of the Commissioner

Kevin Erskine
Commissioner

January 5, 2026

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Glenn Youngkin
Governor of Virginia

Members of the Virginia General Assembly

FROM: Kevin Erskine *KE Erskine*

SUBJECT: Report the Restaurant Meals Program

The attached report is submitted pursuant to Chapter 321 of the 2025 Acts of Assembly, which states:

1. *That the Department of Social Services shall submit a report to the Governor and the General Assembly on the implementation of the Restaurant Meals Program of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program no later than December 1, 2025. Such report shall include (i) the number of restaurants that have applied to participate in the program, (ii) the names and addresses of all restaurants that have been approved to participate, (iii) identified barriers to program expansion and recommendations for alleviating such barriers, and (iv) any other data determined to be relevant to evaluating the program's success or its possible expansion.*

Please contact me if you have questions at (804) 726-7011.

KE:kc

Attachment

cc: The Honorable Janet V. Kelly, Secretary of Health and Human Services

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Virginia Restaurant Meals Program

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VIRGINIA RESTAURANT MEALS PROGRAM

A Report for the Virginia General Assembly

December 1, 2025

REPORT MANDATE

Chapter 321 of the 2025 Acts of Assembly states, “*That the Department of Social Services shall submit a report to the Governor and the General Assembly on the implementation of the Restaurant Meals Program of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program no later than December 1, 2025. Such report shall include (i) the number of restaurants that have applied to participate in the program, (ii) the names and addresses of all restaurants that have been approved to participate, (iii) identified barriers to program expansion and recommendations for alleviating such barriers, and (iv) any other data determined to be relevant to evaluating the program's success or its possible expansion.*”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Virginia Restaurant Meal Program (VRMP) expands food access in the Commonwealth by allowing eligible Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients to purchase prepared meals at participating restaurants.

As of August 31, 2025, a total of 144 applications, representing 132 restaurants, have been submitted to become approved VRMP vendors. A total of 65 restaurants have been approved by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and are currently participating in the program. An additional 37 restaurants have submitted applications and are awaiting federal approval. This report includes the names and addresses of all restaurants that have been approved to participate in the VRMP. One of the main challenges to expanding VRMP in the Commonwealth is a general lack of awareness regarding the program. A significant number of restaurant owners are either unaware of the program's existence or do not fully comprehend its operational framework. This gap in knowledge constrains participation and hinders the program's growth. Additionally, limited resources hinder expansion efforts.

About VDSS and the Virginia Restaurant Meals Program

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) partners with local departments of social services and community organizations to promote the well-being of children and families across the Commonwealth. We proudly serve alongside nearly 13,000 state and local human services professionals throughout the Social Services System, who ensure that thousands of Virginia's most vulnerable citizens have access to the best services and benefits available to them.

Together, we work each day to serve, empower, and create opportunities for brighter futures.

The Virginia Restaurant Meals Program (VRMP) is designed to assist specific populations, including elderly individuals, people with disabilities, and those experiencing homelessness, by facilitating their access to hot, prepared meals at participating restaurants. This initiative represents a collaborative effort between the VDSS and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

DEFINITIONS

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP, formerly known as food stamps, is a federal program funded by the USDA. SNAP provides food and nutrition assistance to low-income households to alleviate food insecurity and promote health and well-being. SNAP supplements the grocery budget of families and individuals so they can afford to purchase nutritious food using the Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card. SNAP EBT cards have restrictions on what can be purchased. Food purchased with SNAP benefits is exempt from the state sales tax.

Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT)

EBT is a system for issuing SNAP benefits using debit card technology. After benefits are added to eligible household accounts, cardholders spend funds by swiping their EBT card at the point of sale (POS) device and then entering their pin number.

EBT Debit Transaction

An EBT debit transaction represents an actual purchase of ingredients or meals at a SNAP-authorized retail store or restaurant. The transaction “debits”, or withdraws, the funds to cover the cost of the food purchase.

Point of Sale (POS) System

POS system is the electronic terminal or software that allows retailers and participating restaurants to process SNAP EBT payments securely.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The VRMP allows individuals who receive SNAP benefits who are 60 or older, have a disability, and/or are unhoused (and their spouses) to use SNAP benefits to purchase meals from restaurants approved by the USDA. There are 65 restaurants that participate in VRMP as of August 2025.

CONTACTS

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Virginia Restaurant Meals Program

SECTION 1 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Agricultural Act of 2014 created the Restaurant Meals Program (RMP), which is a program within SNAP that allows certain populations to use SNAP benefits to purchase prepared meals at approved restaurants using their EBT card. RMP is a voluntary state option available to all states. States must apply to the USDA to administer the RMP.

To qualify for RMP, recipients participating in the SNAP must be certified in a state that administers the program and all individuals residing in the household must meet one of the following criteria: 1.) be classified as elderly, which is defined as being 60 years of age or older; 2.) have a disability, which includes receiving disability or blindness payments, or receiving retirement income from a government agency for a documented disability; 3.) be categorized as homeless; or 4.) be a spouse of an eligible SNAP client.

House Bill (HB) 1410 from the 2020 Session of the Virginia General Assembly directed the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) to implement the federal option of the RMP. To participate in the VRMP, a restaurant must be situated in Virginia and obtain approval from both VDSS and the USDA. The approval process initiates when a restaurant submits a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to the VRMP to become an authorized vendor. Following the receipt of the signed agreement from VDSS, both the restaurant and VRMP establish a formal partnership. The application and signed agreement are then submitted to the USDA for final approval. Only private, for-profit restaurants are eligible to participate in VRMP. Although participation in VRMP does not incur associated fees for restaurants, approved restaurants must upgrade their Point of Sale (POS) software or collaborate with a service provider that facilitates EBT transactions, following approval from the USDA.¹

SECTION 2 CURRENT PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

APPLICATIONS

As of August 31, 2025, a total of 144 VRMP applications, representing 132 restaurants², were submitted to the USDA. Of those applications, 106 have been approved. Applications for the first three restaurants were approved by VRMP in November 2021. Figure 1 shows a breakdown of the number of applications submitted and applications approved in each calendar year.

¹ Virginia Restaurant Meals Program (VRMP), [VRMP Flyer for Restaurant Owners](#). Accessed 8/1/2025 from the Virginia Department of Social Services public website.

² There are instances where restaurants have submitted multiple applications. Each time an application is submitted, the restaurant is assigned a unique FNS number.

The VRMP officially launched on March 10, 2023. As of August 31, 2025, 65 restaurants are actively participating in the program, 37 restaurants have applications pending approval from the USDA. Forty-two restaurants were withdrawn from the program by the USDA due to a lack of activity.

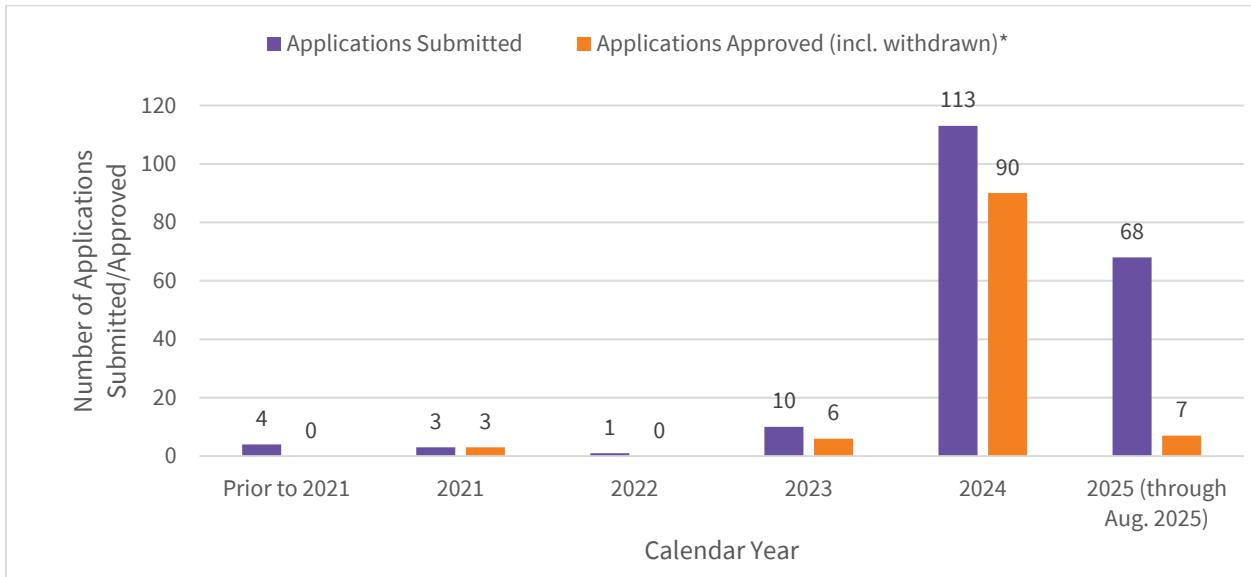


Figure 1. Number of VRMP Applications Submitted and Applications Approved* in VRMP, 2021 - 2025

* Includes approved applications submitted by restaurants that later withdrew from the program.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF APPROVED RESTAURANTS

Using the address data of approved restaurants in the VRMP from August 2025, the map in Figure 2 displays the physical location of approved restaurants participating in the VRMP across the state. Most of the approved restaurants are concentrated in either the Norfolk-Virginia (Tidewater) metropolitan area or the Richmond City metropolitan area. The map insets provide a more detailed view of the two metropolitan areas.

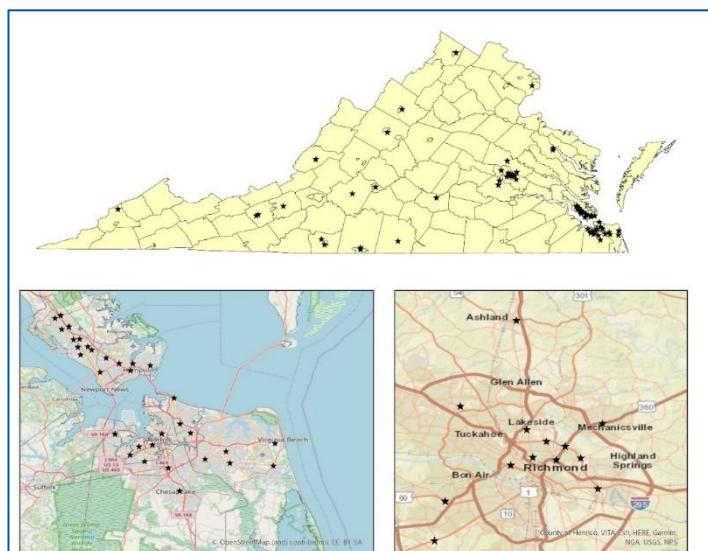


Figure 2 Authorized Restaurants in the Virginia Restaurant Meals Program, August 2025 (with inset maps of the Norfolk-VA Beach & Richmond City areas)

SECTION 2 PARTICIPATING RESTAURANTS

The table below contains the name, address and status date of restaurants that are currently authorized to participate in the VRMP as of August 2025. The original source for the information in the VRMP Dashboard is the USDA.

Restaurant Name	Address	Status date
757 Philly Cheesesteak Cafe	4311 E Claiborne Square, Hampton, VA 23666	5/22/2025
Asian Fusion	2820 Linkhorne Dr, Rear A, Lynchburg, VA 24503 - 3347	7/9/2024
Big Rita's	8453 Main St, Pound, VA 24279 - 5411	2/26/2025
Chamberlayne MCD #1576	2011 Chamberlayne Ave, Richmond, VA 23222 - 4813	10/11/2024
Jing Jing Asian Restaurant	562 Denbigh Blvd, Ste A, Newport News, VA 23608 - 4204	3/28/2025
Juicing LIFE Bar NN	706 Town Center Dr, Ste 102, Newport News, VA 23606 - 4453	10/10/2024
KFC G135129	1300 Fordham Dr, Virginia Beach, VA 23464 - 5334	10/30/2024
KFC G135123	2800 Airline Blvd, Portsmouth, VA 23701 - 2705	10/31/2024
KFC G135124	1603 E Pembroke Ave, Hampton, VA 23663 - 1319	10/18/2024
KFC G135126	1101 W Pembroke Ave, Hampton, VA 23661 - 1156	10/30/2024
KFC G135127	2212 S Military Hwy, Chesapeake, VA 23320 - 5947	10/18/2024
KFC G135128	4253 Holland Rd, Virginia Beach, VA 23452 - 1904	10/30/2024
KFC G135130	12630 Warwick Blvd, Newport News, VA 23606 - 2521	9/4/2024
KFC G135131	12104 Jefferson Ave, Newport News, VA 23602 - 6908	10/30/2024
KFC G135132	1716 Monticello Ave, Norfolk, VA 23517 - 2335	10/30/2024
KFC G135133	15496 Warwick Blvd, Newport News, VA 23608 - 1516	10/30/2024
KFC G135134	1660 General Booth Blvd, Virginia Beach, VA 23454 - 5602	10/18/2024
KFC G135135	5010 Mercury Blvd, Newport News, VA 23605 - 1402	10/30/2024
KFC G135136	199 W Ocean View Ave, Norfolk, VA 23503 - 1502	10/30/2024
KFC G135138	1658 Tappahannock Blvd, Tappahannock, VA 22560 - 9346	10/18/2024
KFC G135141	9000 W Broad St, Richmond, VA 23294 - 5804	9/4/2024
KFC G135142	9300 Midlothian Tpke, North Chesterfield, VA 23235 - 4947	10/18/2024
KFC G135143	207 W Mercury Blvd, Hampton, VA 23669 - 2512	10/30/2024
KFC G135146	7091 Mechanicsville Tpke, Mechanicsville, VA 23111 - 3609	10/31/2024
KFC G135149	10151 Hull Street Rd, Midlothian, VA 23112 - 3301	10/31/2024
KFC G135150	4821 Williamsburg Rd, Henrico, VA 23231 - 2825	10/31/2024
KFC G135152	5004 George Washington Hwy, Portsmouth, VA 23702 - 2602	10/31/2024
KFC G135153	1263 N Military Hwy, Norfolk, VA 23502 - 2228	10/31/2024
KFC G135155	440 Chestnut St, Portsmouth, VA 23704 - 3322	10/31/2024
KFC G135159	3690 Sewells Point Rd, Norfolk, VA 23513 - 3569	10/31/2024
KFC G135160	3148 Western Branch Blvd, Chesapeake, VA 23321 - 5517	10/18/2024
KFC G135165	3800 Mechanicsville Tpke, Richmond, VA 23223 - 1114	10/18/2024
KFC G135626	891 Martin Luther King Jr Way, Harrisonburg, VA 22801 - 3277	10/18/2024
KFC G135628	1022 Richmond Ave, Staunton, VA 24401 - 4904	10/18/2024
KFC G135734	1042 Berryville Ave, Winchester, VA 22601 - 5918	10/18/2024
KFC G135926	2005 S Main St, Farmville, VA 23901 - 2564	10/30/2024

KFC G135927	604 Memorial Dr, Danville, VA 24541 - 1656	10/30/2024
KFC G135928	762 Piney Forest Rd, Danville, VA 24540 - 2859	10/30/2024
KFC G135929	1991 Memorial Dr, Pulaski, VA 24301 - 4413	10/30/2024
KFC G135930	810 S Craig Ave, Covington, VA 24426 - 1927	10/18/2024
KFC G135931	882 E Main St, Bedford, VA 24523 - 2904	10/18/2024
KFC G135932	200 Peppers Fry Rd NE, Christiansburg, VA 24073 - 6550	10/18/2024
KFC G135933	3500 Virginia Ave, Collinsville, VA 24078 - 1783	10/30/2024
KFC G135935	18 Tensbury Dr, Martinsville, VA 24112 - 0678	10/30/2024
KFC G135937	1222 Wilborn Ave, South Boston, VA 24592 - 2420	10/30/2024
KFC G13S148	1006 Azalea Ave, Richmond, VA 23227 - 3410	10/18/2024
KGC G135151	806 England St, A, Ashland, VA 23005 - 2231	10/18/2024
Laburnum MCD #19030	607 E Laburnum Ave, Richmond, VA 23222 - 2206	10/11/2024
Mechanicsville MCD #22790	2310 Mechanicsville Tpke, Richmond, VA 23223 - 2326	10/11/2024
NN Burger	303 Queen St, Tappahannock, VA 22560 - 2316	5/22/2025
Souls Grill	3341 Fall Hill Ave, Fredericksburg, VA 22401 - 2700	8/13/2025
Stone Hot Pizza Telegraph	7578-B Telegraph Rd, Alexandria, VA 22315 - 3829	11/6/2024
Subway	208 N Birdneck Rd, Virginia Beach, VA 23451 - 5776	5/21/2024
Subway	12797 Jefferson Ave, Newport News, VA 23602 - 4317	5/13/2025
Subway #13404	1114 Big Bethel Rd, Hampton, VA 23666 - 1995	6/13/2023
Subway #31979	14501 Warwick Blvd, Ste H, Newport News, VA 23608 - 3752	6/13/2023
Subway #44091	320 Oyster Point Rd, Newport News, VA 23602 - 6902	6/13/2023
Subway #5164	12368 Warwick Blvd, Newport News, VA 23606 - 3803	6/13/2023
Subway #58554	13175 Jefferson Ave, Ste 11, Newport News, VA 23608 - 1480	6/5/2023
SUBWAY 24461	320-3 29th St., Newport News, VA 23607	11/3/2021
SUBWAY 5165	758 J Clyde Morris Blvd., Newport News, VA 23601	11/3/2021
SUBWAY 59421	3301 Washington Ave. Suite 117, Newport News, VA 23607	11/3/2021
Subway 7009	810 Airline Blvd, Portsmouth, VA 23707 - 3307	6/6/2024
Tom's Drive In	620 S Washington Ave, Pulaski, VA 24301 - 6559	5/28/2025
Touche Pies and Fries	1221 N Laburnum Ave, Richmond, VA 23223 - 2179	9/17/2024

SECTION 3 BARRIERS TO PROGRAM EXPANSION

One of the biggest barriers to expanding the VRMP is lack of awareness. Many restaurant owners are either unaware of the program's existence or do not understand how VRMP works. A similar issue was observed in California, specifically in Los Angeles County, where limited advertising and outreach caused fewer than anticipated restaurants to apply.³ Even when there is interest in VRMP, the application process can be confusing and overwhelming, particularly for small businesses lacking administrative support. This may have led to an overrepresentation of national fast-food chains within the number of restaurants that applied to VRMP and were approved. This trend was also evident in other states like Rhode Island⁴.

Another barrier to program expansion is the financial burden on restaurants to acquire and maintain special hardware. The costs associated with upgrading or maintaining an EBT-capable POS system can deter restaurant owners, particularly those operating on tight budgets. Some owners question whether accepting SNAP benefits will generate enough consistent revenue to justify the effort, especially if they need to create lower-cost meal options. Another barrier is confusion regarding program eligibility and EBT card usage. There is also concern that staff may not receive tips when patrons use their EBT cards.

ADDITIONAL BARRIERS

Additional barriers to expanding the VRMP include limited resources and inability to conduct a market analysis, limited established partnerships, administrative complexity, and federal changes.

LIMITED RESOURCES

Due to a lack of resources, VDSS has not been able to conduct a market analysis to examine low participation rates among restaurants throughout the state, the potential for increasing the number of restaurants participating, and the demand for food assistance through VRMP.

LIMITED ESTABLISHED PARTNERSHIPS

VRMP has encountered challenges in establishing partnerships with local coalitions and food organizations to recruit new restaurants and promote awareness of the program. Although VRMP currently partners with the local food banks to engage in outreach and spread awareness, the program's attempts to partner with other local organizations, such as local restaurant groups, have not materialized.

³Robertson, Barbara (2020). *Food Equity through Restaurant Meals: An Evaluation of Los Angeles County's Restaurant Meals Program*. Occidental College.

⁴ Department of Human Services Rhode Island (2021). Restaurants Accepting SNAP Benefits. <https://dhs.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur426/files/Documents/RestaurantMealsProgramFlyerJan2021.pdf>

Local coalitions that are state or federally funded (e.g., community action agencies), operate within a restricted scope of work and their funding and guiding work plans do not allow them to conduct outreach activities related to RMP. Due to recent federal budget cuts and the elimination of some programs, VRMP cannot partner with AmeriCorps and access their volunteer network for outreach and recruitment activities.

Numerous food truck operators have expressed a desire to participate in the program, yet current federal guidelines do not permit the use of food trucks. VDSS's application to conduct a pilot project involving the use of food trucks was denied by the USDA.

ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLEXITY

VRMP must comply with the USDA guidelines for operating a restaurant meals program. With only one staff member assigned to manage the program, administrative responsibilities such as contracting, marketing, and compliance with USDA guidelines exceed current capacity. This limitation creates a barrier to program administration; the volume and complexity of required administrative work cannot be fully met under the current staffing structure. This staffing constraint remains a key obstacle to achieving the program's full potential.

FEDERAL CHANGES

Some restaurants may not understand or be reluctant to engage in the VRMP due to funding and rule changes at the federal level, stemming from H.R. 1 from July 2025. VDSS redirected focus to the priority of reducing the SNAP payment error rate.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ALLEVIATE BARRIERS TO PROGRAM EXPANSION

To enhance and expand participation in the VRMP and alleviate the identified barriers, Virginia can implement strategies such as:

- Prioritize VRMP marketing efforts in high-need regions of the state as based on data derived findings.
- Providing comprehensive technical assistance particularly to support restaurants in upgrading to EBT-compatible POS devices.
- Collaborating with local restaurant associations to strengthen outreach efforts and build trust within the community.
- Providing toolkits, conducting workshops, subsidizing equipment whenever feasible, and actively promoting participating restaurants to reduce uncertainty and encourage greater participation among restaurant owners.

Expanding the VRMP would involve increasing the number of participating restaurants to better serve eligible SNAP recipients who are elderly, disabled, or unhoused. The growth of the program requires targeted outreach and education aimed at helping restaurant owners understand potential benefits of participation, such as attracting new customers and supporting vulnerable community members. There is also an opportunity to improve the VRMP

enrollment process by simplifying the application process, providing technical assistance, and promoting enrolled restaurants through public directories and local campaigns.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is central to this program expansion effort. Successful implementation of VRMP requires community-based engagement activities such as planned kickoff events to promote increased awareness of VRMP at community engagement events, including farmers' markets, schools, and other outreach efforts. These current outreach activities are necessary to reach a broad audience, with a particular emphasis on eligible SNAP recipients, restaurants, and community partners who can help raise awareness of the program.

ADVERTISING

Increased advertising will further enhance VRMP's visibility through social media platforms managed by VDSS and its partner organizations. VDSS will work to develop promotional materials and marketing toolkits that can be consistently shared across various channels. This approach will ensure that messaging is both professional and accessible, increasing awareness among potential participants and restaurants.

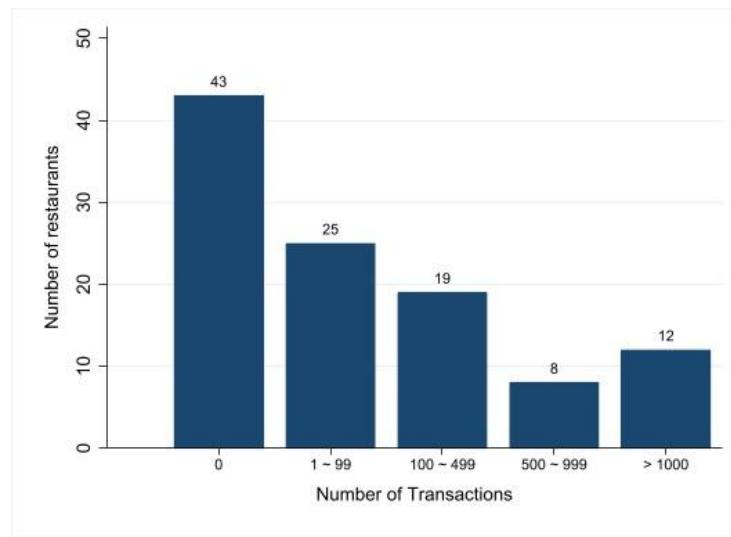
MARKET RESEARCH STUDY

To guide and refine these strategies, VDSS may also commission a professional market research study. The information obtained from a market research study would help identify the most promising restaurants to recruit and highlight marketing approaches that resonate with specific SNAP populations. By analyzing demographic and purchasing patterns, VRMP can better tailor its outreach efforts, ensuring that growth strategies align with the needs and habits of the communities it aims to support.

SECTION 4 ADDITIONAL RELEVANT DATA

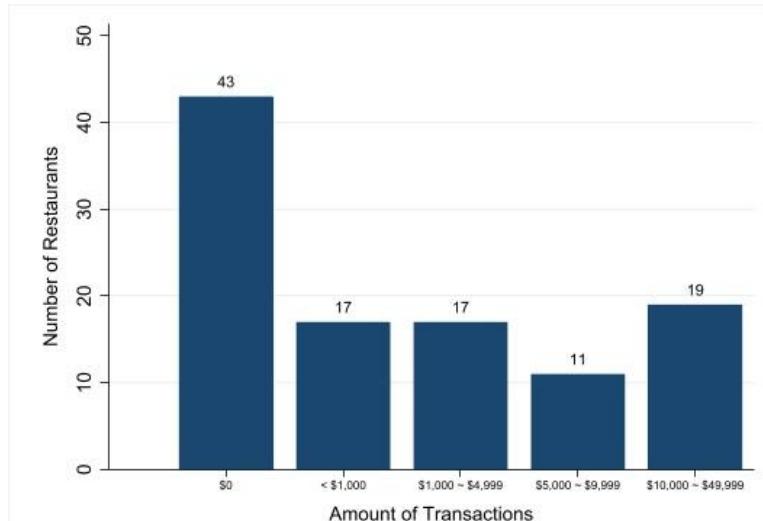
EBT TRANSACTIONS

Of the 144 applicants assigned Food and Nutrition Service numbers (FNS) between November 2021 and August 2025, 107 approved restaurants were found in the Conduent transaction database. Conduent is an online payment service used by 46 states, including Virginia, to track SNAP EBT transactions. Among the 107 applicants in the database, 64 had at least one EBT debit transaction, which represents the purchase of a meal using an EBT card. The remaining 43 applicants recorded only "administrative transactions" in which the vendor's account was enabled or disabled. The earliest transaction occurred in March 2023. The VRMP-approved restaurants had varying numbers of debit transactions. The total number of debit transactions that have occurred range from 0 to 3,424 per restaurant. Figure 3 below shows the distribution of the number of debit transactions across all participating restaurants.



1Figure 33. Total Number of EBT Transactions Per VRMP Restaurant (as of September 10, 2025)

An analysis of the total EBT transaction amounts (in dollars) of participating restaurants revealed that 43 restaurants had no EBT transactions. Among the remaining 64 restaurants that had at least one transaction, the total EBT transaction amount ranged from \$14.83 to \$40,223.68, with a median amount of \$4,501.34. Figure 4 demonstrates the variation in the total transaction amounts across all 107 restaurants matched in the Conduent database.



2Total Amount (\$) of EBT Transactions Per VRMP Restaurant (as of September 10, 2025)

TRENDS IN EBT DEBIT TRANSACTIONS

Since the start of VRMP in 2021, a total of 30,876 EBT debit transactions, for a total amount of \$516,214, were made at approved restaurants. This includes restaurants that are currently approved and restaurants that have withdrawn from the program. Between April 1, 2025, and August 31, 2025, there were 17,620 EBT debit transactions, for a total amount of \$312,093,

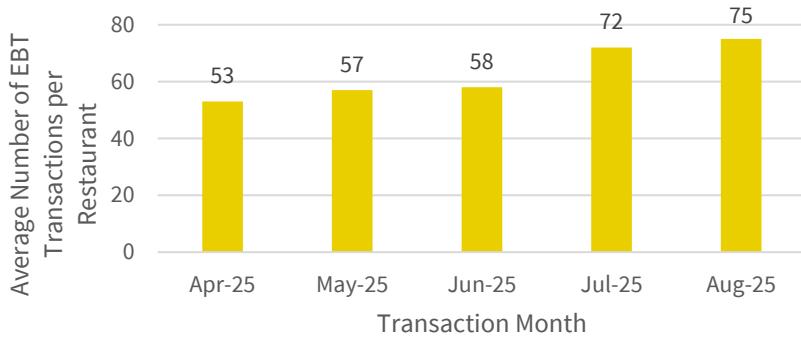
occurring at approved restaurants across the state. The number of approved restaurants varied between 53 and 59, depending on which month's data were analyzed. Table 2 shows the number of participating restaurants, the number of participating restaurants with at least one EBT debit transaction, the total number of EBT debit transactions, and the total amount spent on EBT transactions per month between April 2025 and August 2025.

- The total number of EBT debit transactions statewide increased 52% from 2,788 in April 2025 to 4,248 in August 2025 (Table 2). The total amount spent on EBT debit transactions across all participating restaurants increased 62%, from approximately \$47,600 in April 2025 to \$77,100 in August 2025.
- The average number of EBT debit transactions per restaurant increased from 53 in April 2025 to 75 in August 2025 (Figure 5). The average amount spent on EBT debit transactions per restaurant also increased 51% from \$898 in April 2025 to \$1,352 in August 2025 (Figure 6).
- The average amount spent per EBT debit transaction also increased between April 2025 and August 2025 – from \$17.08 to \$18.15 (Figure 7).
- There may be seasonal differences in the monthly number of debit transactions with more transactions occurring during the summer months when people are more likely to eat out.

Table 1. Monthly EBT Debit Transactions and Amount Spent (\$) in VRMP, April– August 2025

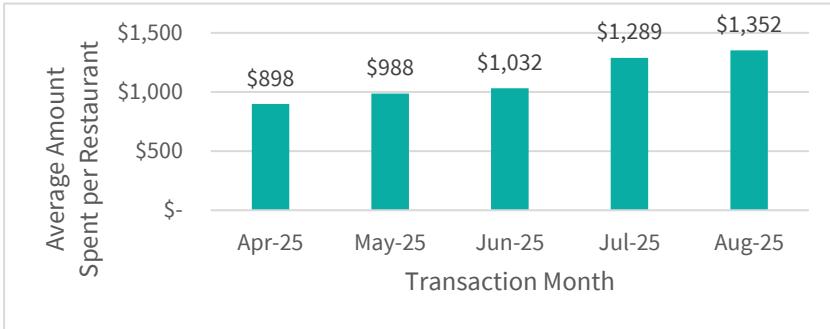
Transaction Month	Number of Approved Restaurants	Restaurants With ≥ 1 Debit Transactions ¹	Number of Debit Transactions	Total Amount Spent (\$)
Apr-2025	100	53	2,788	\$47,617
May-2025	68	55	3,122	\$54,315
Jun-2025	68	59	3,439	\$60,891
Jul-2025	64	56	4,023	\$72,188
Aug-2025	65	57	4,248	\$77,082
Total	365	280	17,620	\$312,093

Figure 5. Average Number of EBT Debit Transactions Per Restaurant in VRMP, April – August 2025



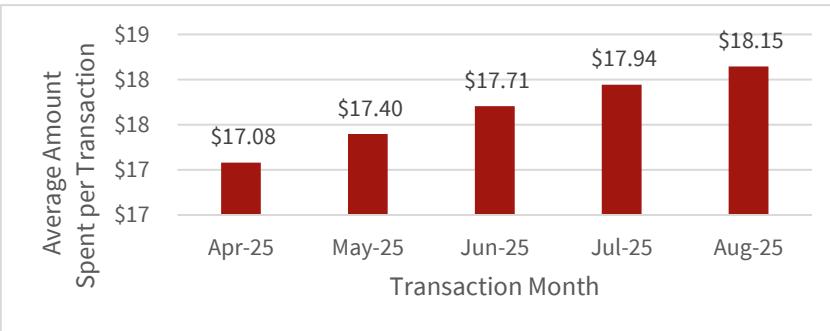
The “Average Transactions per Restaurant” is calculated by dividing the total number of transactions for the month by the total number of restaurants that have one or more transactions for the month.

Figure 6. Average Amount Spent (\$) Per Restaurant in VRMP, April – August 2025



The “Average Amount Spent per Restaurant” is calculated by dividing the total amount spent for the month by the number of restaurants that have one or more transactions for the month.

Figure 7. Average Amount Spent (\$) Per Debit Transaction in VRMP, April – August 2025



The “Average Amount per Transaction” is calculated by dividing the total amount spent for the month by the total number of transactions for the month.

STAKEHOLDER SURVEYS

The VRMP project team developed two electronic surveys: one for participating restaurants and another for conducting outreach to restaurants under recruitment. The surveys were part of a broader effort to ensure the program remained responsive to community needs and stakeholder concerns. The objectives of the survey were to:

- Gauge interest in and awareness of the program
- Assess restaurant readiness and willingness to participate
- Identify barriers to participation and challenges in the application process
- Collect feedback to improve program rollout and operations

The outreach survey and accompanying invitation letter were used by VDSS staff during outreach efforts. The survey for participating restaurants was launched electronically on July 18, 2025. Emails were sent out to 28 current restaurant owners, several of whom operate multiple locations within the program. VDSS followed up with two reminder emails on July 28 and August 1. Despite these efforts, only two responses were received.

A new distribution method has been developed to improve survey response rates. Moving forward, the survey link will be included in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) letter provided to restaurants during onboarding. This approach aims to make survey completion a required step in the onboarding process, thereby encouraging greater participation.

Although the survey response pool was limited, one actionable insight emerged: one respondent noted the “need [for] more info for restaurant owners just starting out.” Although the specific type of information needed was not provided, the feedback suggests that developing or enhancing a Frequently Asked Questions document could help address the need for introductory guidance for restaurant owners.

PROGRAM MONITORING

VDSS developed two interactive reports: the “VRMP Dashboard” and the “VRMP Audit Dashboard”. Both reports were created in Power BI, a data visualization tool, and provide detailed information and aggregate data about restaurants participating in the program and EBT transactions linked to VRMP. The information obtained from the dashboards help monitor VRMP program performance. The VRMP Audit Dashboard is for internal audit use only. Both dashboards are updated monthly with new participant information and transaction data. In 2026, VDSS will re-evaluate the use of the dashboards to determine if an additional version of the VRMP Dashboard will be designed for public access.

SECTION 5 CONCLUSION

The Virginia Restaurant Meals Program (VRMP) has made important progress since its launch, expanding access to prepared meals for SNAP recipients who are elderly, disabled, or experiencing homelessness. Participation has grown steadily, and EBT transaction data shows increasing program use across the state. These trends reflect a strong foundation for continued development.

However, the program still faces significant challenges, including limited awareness among restaurant owners, administrative complexity, resource constraints, and shifting federal priorities. These barriers reduce the number of restaurants able or willing to participate and limit the program's ability to meet community needs.

To support meaningful expansion, targeted outreach, improved guidance for restaurant owners, strengthened partnerships, and dedicated market research will be essential. By addressing these barriers and enhancing program capacity, VRMP can continue to improve food access for vulnerable Virginians while building a more sustainable and widely utilized program.

APPENDIX A LEGISLATIVE MANDATE

CHAPTER 321 OF THE 2025 ACTS OF ASSEMBLY

§ 1. That the Department of Social Services shall submit a report to the Governor and the General Assembly on the implementation of the Restaurant Meals Program of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program no later than December 1, 2025. Such report shall include (i) the number of restaurants that have applied to participate in the program, (ii) the names and addresses of all restaurants that have been approved to participate, (iii) identified barriers to program expansion and recommendations for alleviating such barriers, and (iv) any other data determined to be relevant to evaluating the program's success or its possible expansion.

