

**SNAP/Food Assistance Highlights:**

- The number of individuals receiving SNAP/food assistance from 2008 to 2014 grew by **99.7%** and households by **114%**.
- In spite of this dramatic growth, **Colorado ranked 17th best out of 53 reporting states** and territories for its timeliness of processing SNAP/food assistance applications at **91.91 % in FY2014**.
- More recently, in **August 2015**, Colorado accomplished timely processing of **96.9%** for new applications and **94.9%** for expedited applications. From 2014 to August 2015 Colorado improved timely processing of new applications by **5%** and may rank as high as **3<sup>rd</sup> best among reporting states and territories**.

## Human Services Fact Sheet

FA 2

### SNAP/ Food Assistance Caseload Growth, Timeliness, and Accuracy

Colorado Counties Inc. & CHSDA

1-1-2016

Colorado counties are committed to serving families in the most efficient, effective manner that is tailored to meet the needs of individuals and the communities in which they live.

Counties invest in wrap around services, which means that families who come through our doors are screened for eligibility in SNAP/food assistance, cash assistance, work training, medical assistance, and other programs and interventions that can aid in achieving self-sufficiency.

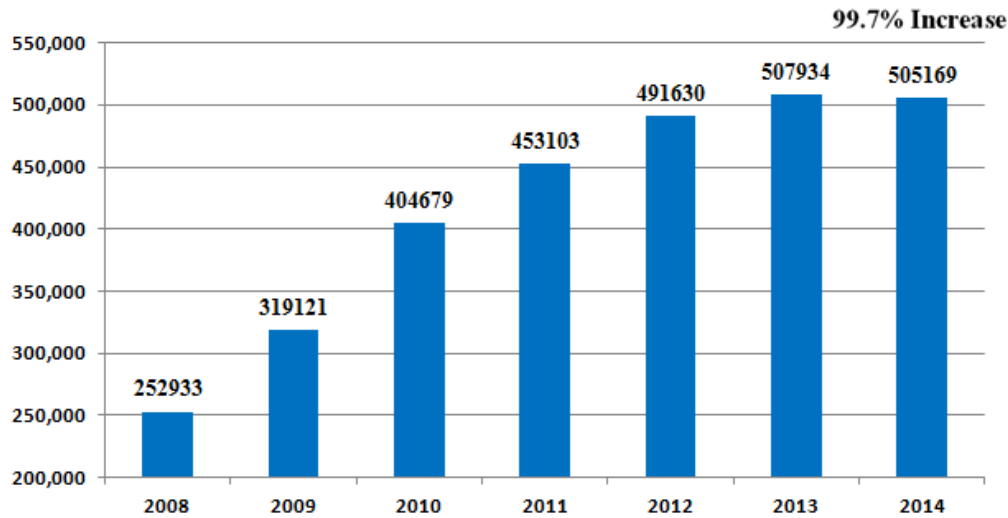
While SNAP/food assistance is an entitlement program for customer benefits, counties rely on county administration funding to support SNAP/food assistance administrative costs. Counties are sorely under-allocated in county administration funding, which serves to pay for the staff and other activities that support SNAP/food assistance and other benefit programs. Consequently, counties must balance the competing priorities of meeting the high volume of customers seeking services and processing eligibility and meeting timeliness and accuracy standards. Counties also perform outreach activities to promote program awareness, access and enrollment within areas of our communities, particularly those where there are high populations of eligible but not enrolled, within this limited budget.

While counties remain committed to a continuous improvement philosophy and strive to improve our performance and service delivery in all areas for the communities that we serve, we are proud of the good work we do for our families and communities.

#### **Participation:**

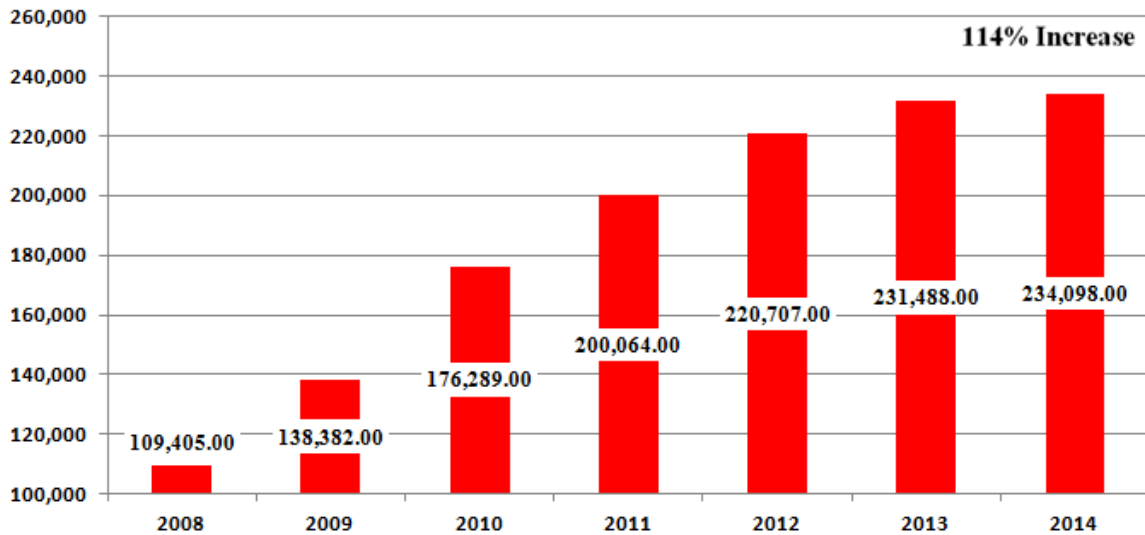
Nationally and in Colorado, SNAP/food assistance has experienced major growth in recent years. The following graph reflects the growth in individuals receiving SNAP/food assistance in Colorado.

**Colorado - Number of Individuals Participating in Food Assistance, 2008 to 2014**



**Source:** Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. 2015. Table: Participation and Issuance and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Average Monthly Participation (Persons) as of June 5, 2015.

**Number of Households Participating in Food Assistance, 2008 to 2014**



**Source:** Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. 2015. *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation and Issuance*, Tables 1– FY 2008 & FY 2009 and

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Average Monthly Participation (Households)  
as of June 5, 2015.

**Timeliness:**

**Colorado ranked 17th best out of 53 reporting states** and territories for timely processing of SNAP/food assistance applications at **91.91 % in FY2014**. More recently, in August 2015, **Colorado achieved timeliness of 96.9% for new applications and 94.9% for expedited applications**. Although federal comparison data are not yet available, there is a good chance that Colorado will rank even higher, perhaps third best, in timely processing of new food assistance applications. These numbers show significant improvement from the 72.71% and 74.27% respective rates from January 2011. Similarly, the percentage of benefit redeterminations processed in a timely fashion improved from 48.02% in January 2011 to **92.5%** in August 2015. The improvements in timely processing are remarkable given the growth in the number of Colorado individuals (+**99.7%**) and households (+**114%**) receiving SNAP/food assistance from 2008 to 2014.

**Accuracy:**

Colorado counties have been working collaboratively with the state to improve our overall error rates. Currently, the payment error rate (PER) for under and overpayments in Colorado lands us in the middle of the pack, when looking comparatively across all states. Overall, Colorado ranks 27 out of 53 states and territories for FY2014. Notably, Colorado saw the 4<sup>th</sup> greatest improvement among those 53 states and territories in this area. Overall, only Vermont, Kansas, and Rhode Island improved in their PER at higher rates than Colorado.

Colorado is also responsible for measuring incorrect negative actions taken on a case, which is defined as the Case & Procedural Error Rate (CAPER). The national CAPER average for October 2014 through May 2015 is 24.98%. While at first blush, Colorado's rate of 42.72% is alarming, it is important to recognize that when state-level errors are removed from this calculation, which includes faulty CBMS notices and other technology-based problems that are beyond the control of counties, the combined county CAPER for this period was 28.40%, which is much more in line with the national average.

While these numbers help paint a more accurate picture, counties are still not satisfied with our error rates. Together, counties and CDHS developed an action plan that includes state, county and combined commitments all aimed in gaining further improvements, and looking through a sustainability lens. These strategies include ongoing data analysis in driving understanding and decisions, revisiting efficiencies in county business processes, and system enhancements.

**County Administration Funding Levels:**

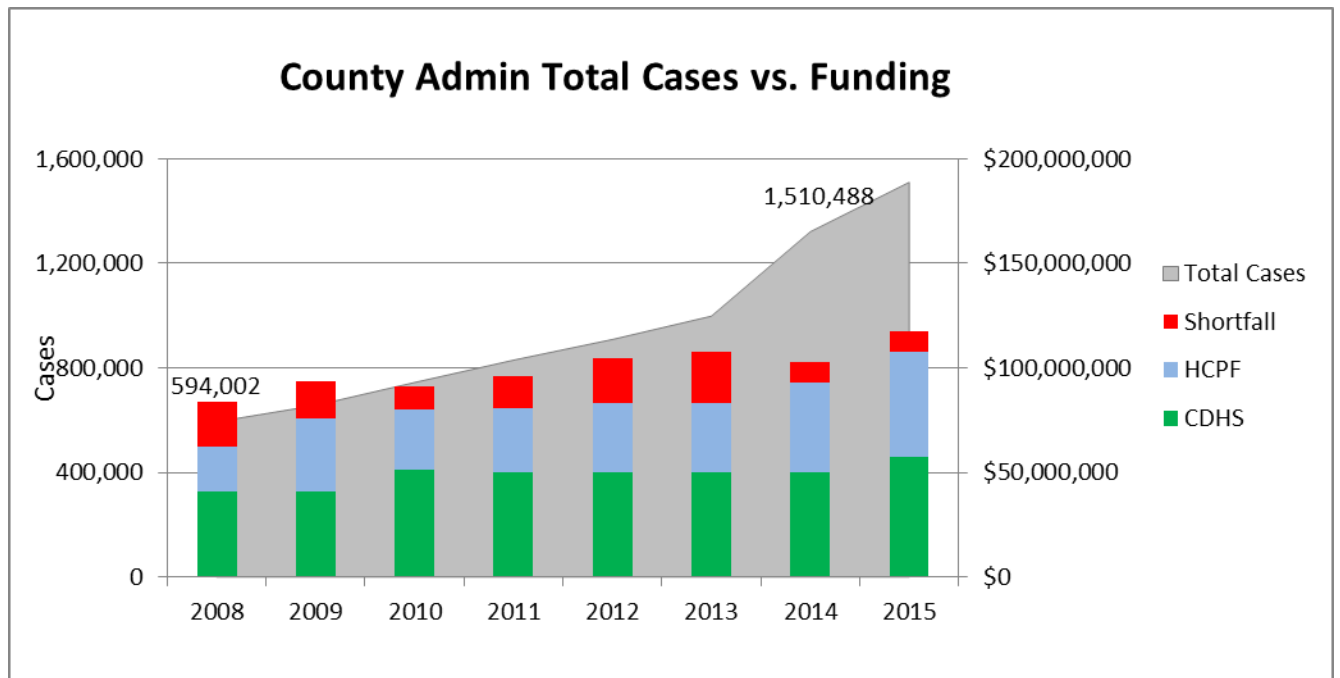
For years, the County Administration line item has been under funded. Colorado's recent economic challenges have resulted in an increase in clients needing public benefits. From 2008 to 2014, county caseloads have increased by approximately 154%, with the majority of that increase coming from Medicaid and SNAP/food assistance.

It is important to recognize that if counties underspend the County Administration line item in one of two state agencies (either Colorado Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF) or Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS)) those monies can be transferred to the other state agency to help balance an overspending by counties in programs supervised by the other agency. Even with that flexibility, counties' expenditures consistently exceed appropriated levels. When this occurs, counties are responsible for covering the shortfall minus any additional federal funding that they might be able to draw down.

Counties have been operating under a deficit in County Administration funding under CDHS for 16 years. Counties were last fully funded in this important area in 1999. In SFY 2014-15, counties were overspent on County Admin by 9% (NOTE: The percentage overspent in the CDHS side is 17%; the 9% is on the combined appropriations, CDHS + HCPF). The combined appropriations (CDHS + HCPF) underfund county expenditures for SFY 2015 by almost \$9.7 million. The entire amount is attributable to the CDHS side, although the complexities of the entire close-out process incorporate the close out of Adult Protective Services, Regular Medicaid, Enhanced Medicaid funding, and internal adjustments to reach the best final result.

The following charts show the discrepancies between the allocations and the cost of this work. The graph below clearly demonstrates that despite a rapid growth in caseload, the County Administration line item has not correspondingly increased to meet the need.

<b>Calculation of County Under Funding</b>	
FY 2012-13 Total Allocation (CDHS & HCPF Allocations Combined)	\$83,170,291
FY 2012-13 <b>Actual Expenditures</b>	\$107,825,585
Total Under Appropriation	<b>\$24,655,294</b>
FY 2013-14 Total Allocation (CDHS & HCPF Allocations Combined)	\$93,176,830
FY 2013-14 <b>Actual Expenditures</b>	\$102,619,295
Total Under Appropriation	<b>\$9,442,466</b>
FY 2014-15 Total Allocation (CDHS & HCPF Allocations Combined)	\$107,508,109
FY 2014-15 <b>Actual Expenditures</b>	\$117,204,294
Total Under Appropriation	<b>\$9,696,185</b>



**Sources:**

CDHS. 2015. *C-STAT: Summary Report January – March 2015*. Denver, Colorado: Colorado Department of Human Services.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. 2014. *State Activity Report – Fiscal Year 2013, Average Monthly Benefit – Ranked per Household – FY 2013: Table 29*.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. 2015. *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation and Issuance, Tables 1– FY 2008 & FY 2009 and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Average Monthly Participation (Households) as of June 5, 2015*. Washington, DC: US Department of Agriculture.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. 2015a. SNAP Table: Prevalence of Household-Level Food Insecurity and Very Low Food Security, Average 2011-13, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Available online at: [http://www.ers.usda.gov.gov/media/136963/map\\_d.html](http://www.ers.usda.gov.gov/media/136963/map_d.html))

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program FY 2014 Error Rates, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Available online at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/snap/2014-rates.pdf>

Unpublished documents provided to the Colorado Department of Human Services by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

SNAPQA Monthly Reports provided by the Colorado Department of Human Services.