Results from the Healthy Incentives Pilot (HIP), a United States Department of Agriculture program, shows financial incentives for targeted fruits and vegetables increased consumption of these healthful foods.

HIP gave SNAP beneficiaries 30 cents for every SNAP dollar spent on appropriate fruits and vegetables. When a participant bought these items, the 30 cent incentive was automatically credited back to their Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. Beneficiaries could use the extra money on any other eligible item under SNAP.

Results show that HIP increased consumption of fruits and vegetables in adult SNAP beneficiaries by 25 percent. SNAP beneficiaries who participated in HIP also consumed an ounce more fruits and vegetables per day than beneficiaries who did not participate in HIP. Around 70 percent of HIP participants thought fruits and vegetables were more affordable with the pilot program.

In a United States Department of Agriculture news release Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said "although healthy foods aren't necessarily more expensive, many low income people face time and resource challenges when it comes to putting healthy food on the table that can make less healthy options seem more appealing."

HIP was created under the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008. The pilot program lasted from November 2011 to December 2012. It was run by the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance in Hampden County.

By: Marina Byrd

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