



**GREATER  
CHICAGO**  
- FOOD -  
DEPOSITORY™



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Sept. 23, 2019**

**Contact:**

Zareena Meyn, phone: 872-216-4025, [zareena@mrelief.com](mailto:zareena@mrelief.com)

Greg Trotter, phone: 312-509-0137, [gtrotter@gcfd.org](mailto:gtrotter@gcfd.org)

**Greater Chicago Food Depository and mRelief to pilot mobile-friendly tool for SNAP enrollment**

*New partnership aims to help more Cook County families in need access food assistance*

**Chicago** – The Greater Chicago Food Depository is partnering with mRelief, a Chicago tech startup, to launch a mobile application process that will allow Cook County residents to apply for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits directly from their phones.

Together, the Food Depository and mRelief are working to bridge the technology gap that currently exists in social service infrastructure. mRelief’s end-to-end SNAP enrollment tool allows Cook County residents to complete the application for SNAP benefits, formerly known as food stamps, on a mobile-friendly application.

The mRelief app breaks down complex concepts in clear terms that are easier to understand than the typical enrollment process for social services.

“SNAP is one the most invaluable food access programs available to families coping with hunger and poverty,” said Nicole Robinson, vice president of community impact at the Food Depository. “mRelief’s innovative platform prioritizes the needs of SNAP recipients by leveraging technology to improve community access to critical food assistance programs.”

Beyond distributing food to partner agencies and programs in Chicago and throughout Cook County, the Food Depository also connects low-income people to SNAP and Medicaid. In this partnership with mRelief, the Food Depository will work with the state to help ensure that the applications are processed in a timely manner.

Using the mRelief tool, SNAP applicants can check their eligibility for SNAP benefits and apply online in less than 20 minutes. The application is then printed and mailed to applicants by the Food Depository, and once returned, the application is submitted to representatives at the Illinois Department of Human Services for processing.

“This partnership with the Food Depository is an exciting step towards our mission to restore dignity by transforming access to social services with a longstanding beacon of food security like the Food Depository,” said Rose Afriyie, executive director of mRelief.

Applying for SNAP benefits can be a lengthy and daunting bureaucratic process. Condensing the application to a user-friendly format is a game changer that can reduce anxieties for families who are already facing difficult times.

“I didn’t know how the process was going to work, I was a little hesitant,” said Aletha, an Illinois resident who accessed SNAP through mRelief. “It was a great experience. I was really impressed.”

Nationwide, mRelief aims to enroll 1 million people for SNAP by the end of next year, unlocking nearly \$1 billion in SNAP benefits across the US.

###

### **About the Greater Chicago Food Depository**

The Greater Chicago Food Depository, Chicago’s food bank, is at the center of a robust network of more than 700 organizations and programs serving people facing hunger in Cook County. Founded in 1979, the Food Depository is a proud member of Feeding America, the national network of food banks. By working to help those most in need go from hungry to hopeful, the Food Depository is building a Greater Chicago. Learn more at [chicagosfoodbank.org](http://chicagosfoodbank.org)

### **About mRelief**

mRelief is the easy-to-use platform on web, text and voice for Americans to sign up for SNAP. Founded in 2014, the all-woman software development team is a vendor to one of the largest social services agencies in the US, the California Department of Social Services. In California they have deployed the first-ever end-to-end enrollment system for SNAP in the US - all over text messaging. mRelief has connected more than 469,000 families to SNAP or other public support and unlocked \$100M in SNAP. Founded in 2014, the nonprofit has a presence in 44 states and randomized control trials have demonstrated that their interventions can increase SNAP enrollment by 18 percent.