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## How SaverLife Helped a Family on SNAP Benefits Survive

February 2019

When the government shutdown hit in early January, SaverLife Saver Erica from Augusta, Georgia, learned she would only receive \$40 to help pay for the apartment she lives in with her two sons, Ethan, age four, and Dimitri, almost two. This was a 90% reduction from the \$400 per month she had been receiving, increasing her monthly rent obligation from \$194 to \$554.

Fortunately, with SaverLife's help, Erica had built an emergency fund to help fill the gap. "Since everything has been delayed and on hold, I just had to substitute," she said, adding that she's eager to rebuild that cushion. "That is why I'm trying to work a little bit extra so I can put it back. But I had to take so much out to help make up that cost."

Erica is one of over 10,000 Americans receiving benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) who have signed up to earn prizes and rewards with SaverLife. Of those 10,000 people, one in three have increased their savings, and they've done so by an average of \$490 in their first six months with SaverLife.

Before SaverLife, Erica tried to save between \$20 and \$30 per paycheck for "a rainy day," but she struggled to meet her goal consistently. When she found SaverLife, she was eager to give it a try: "I could earn more money for actually saving. I thought that was a pretty cool idea."

Erica's saving frequency and bank account balance increased after joining SaverLife. "My savings became more consistent, and I was saving a little bit more. The \$20-30 went to like \$50 per paycheck."



### Successful Savers Who Receive SNAP Benefits Changed Their Habits After Six Months

Saving at least monthly



at sign up



at six months

Has 3 months expenses saved



at sign up



at six months

Spending less than income



at sign up



at six months

Based on any saver who has claimed a reward

Many other SNAP recipients have had similar experiences with SaverLife. After six months with SaverLife, they report that:

- They're much more likely to save at least monthly
- They're more likely to have at least three months of expenses saved
- They're more likely to be spending less than their income<sup>1</sup>

Erica achieved all of this while single-handedly taking care of her two children and earning \$10 an hour as a customer service representative. At the same time, she is working to earn, and pay for, an associate's degree so she can become a pharmaceutical technician, where she expects to increase her wages to \$15 per hour.

Erica has a lot in common with the many SaverLife members who receive SNAP benefits, of which:

- 85% are women
- 68% are single with dependents, 16% are single with no dependents
- 60% are minorities
- 73% are under 40, 35% are under 30
- 91% don't have an associate's degree or higher
- Self-reported average income is \$11,289

As the Urban Institute found in their landmark study, just a few hundred dollars in savings can make a huge difference.<sup>2</sup> Savings help families avoid eviction, keep utilities accounts current, and stave off hardships after job loss, health issues, or large income drops. Erica's story is proof that anyone, regardless of their income, can build a habit of saving money, and that even a little bit saved can go a long way.

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**Read Erica's full story on [earn.org/blog](https://earn.org/blog)**  
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1. Based on any saver who redeemed rewards after six months

2. Source: <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/thriving-residents-thriving-cities-family-financial-security-matters-cities>



EARN's online SaverLife community empowers low-income households to take control of their financial lives by offering digital financial coaching, online resources, and monetary incentives and prizes for saving. SaverLife members hail from all 50 states and are representative of the broad swath of Americans who struggle to save and are working to develop lasting financial security.

Big Data on Small Savings research, supported by MetLife Foundation, explores the collective experience of thousands of SaverLife members to unearth rich insights and provide data-driven perspectives on what works in helping individuals develop financial security.

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