

# Does Limiting Choice in Food Assistance Programs Affect Dietary Quality Among School-Aged Children?

Phil Gleason, Mathematica Policy Research

Rethinking Food Assistance Policy:  
New Experimental Evidence on Improving Food Security and Nutrition among Low-income Families and Implications for Policy

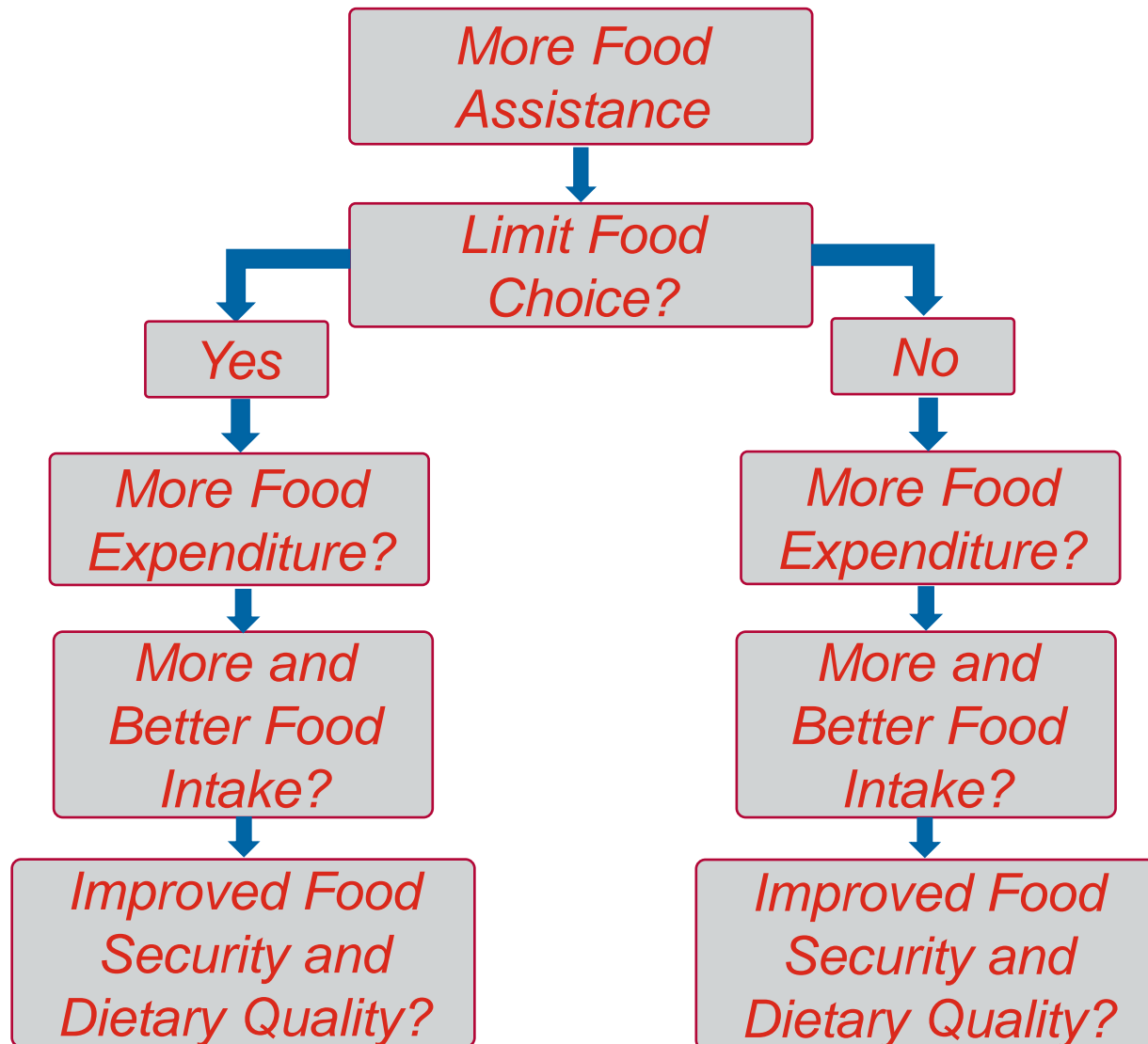
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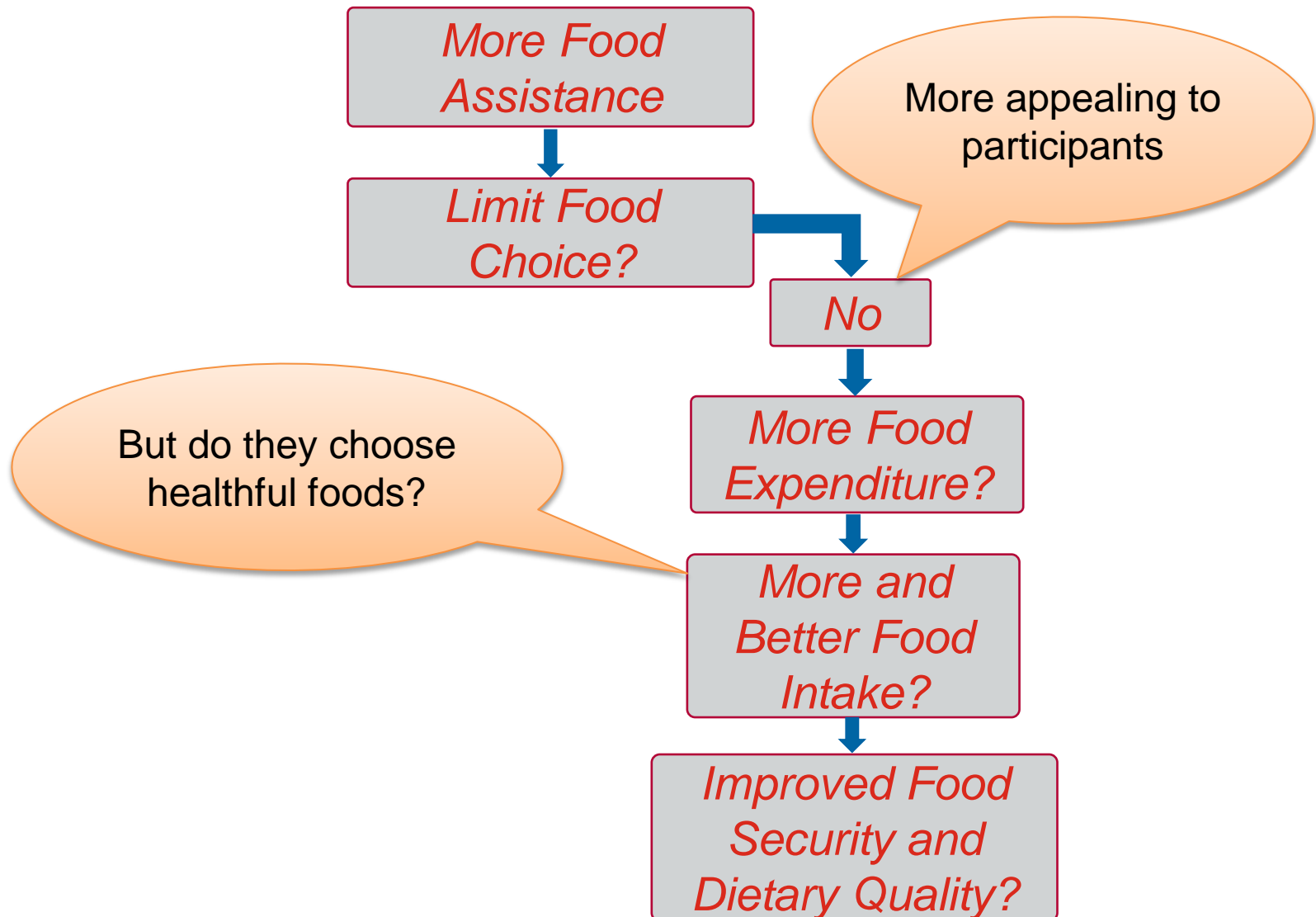
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Policy Research



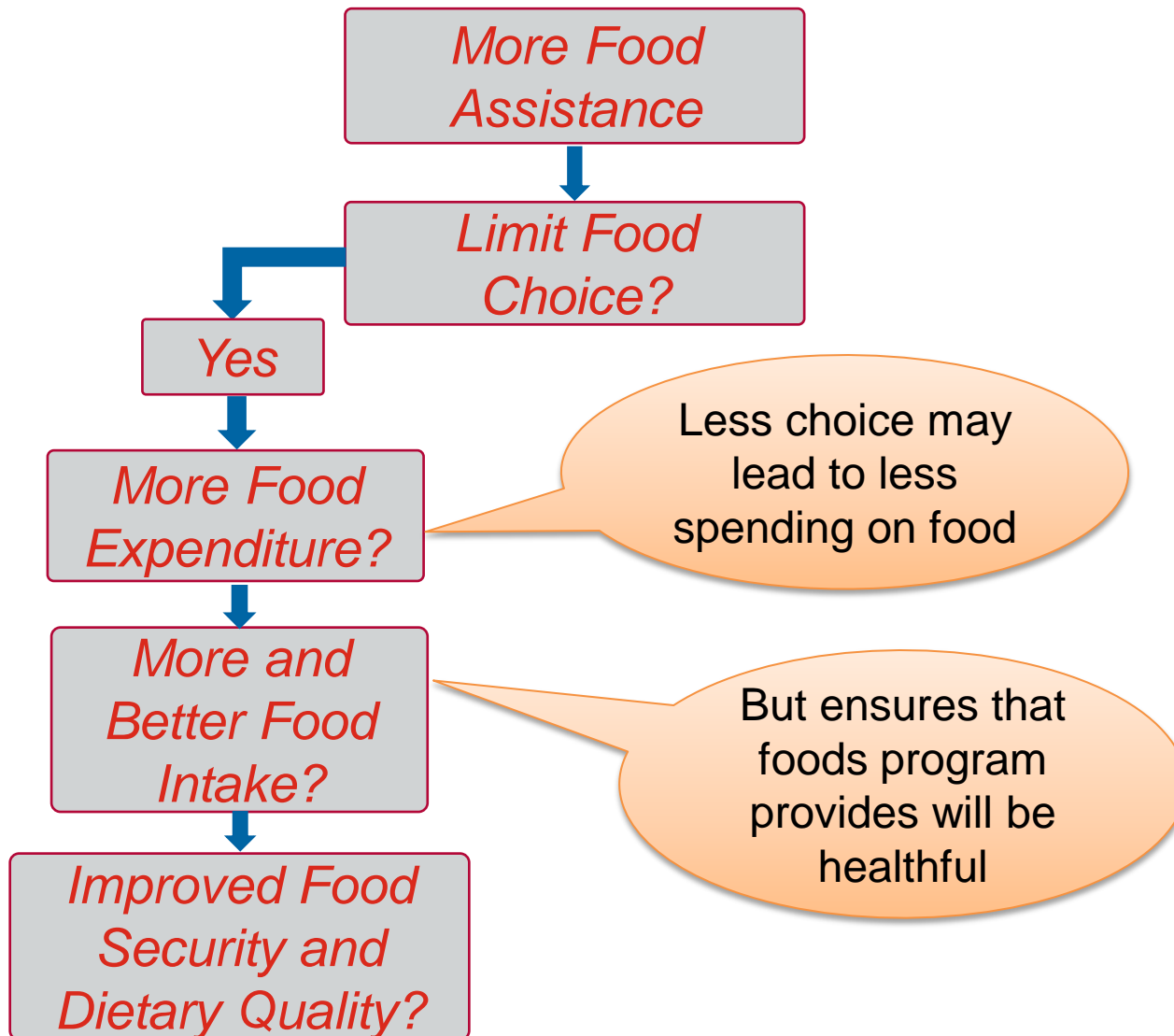
# Key Design Decision for Food Assistance Programs



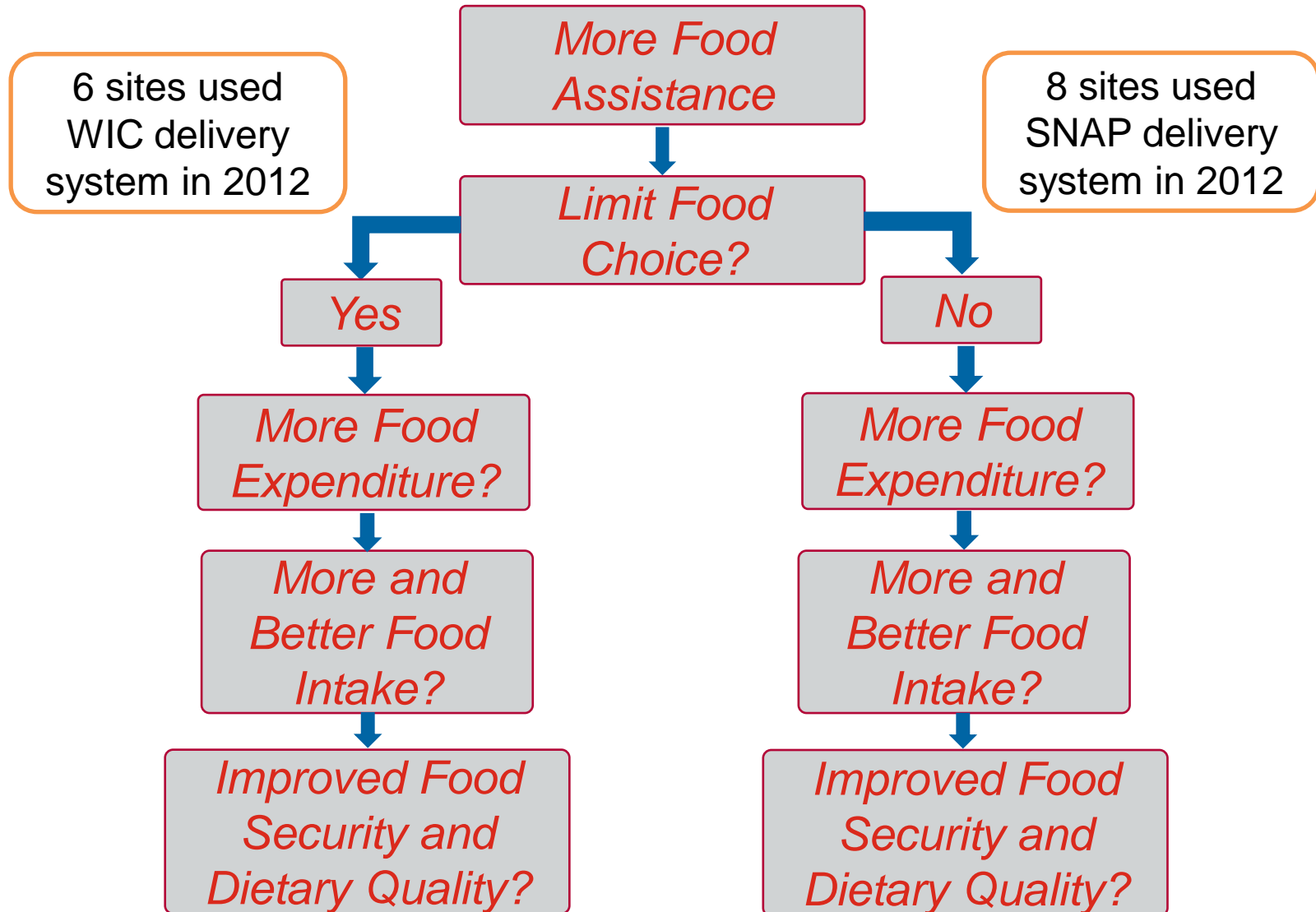
# SNAP: Few Limits on Food Choice



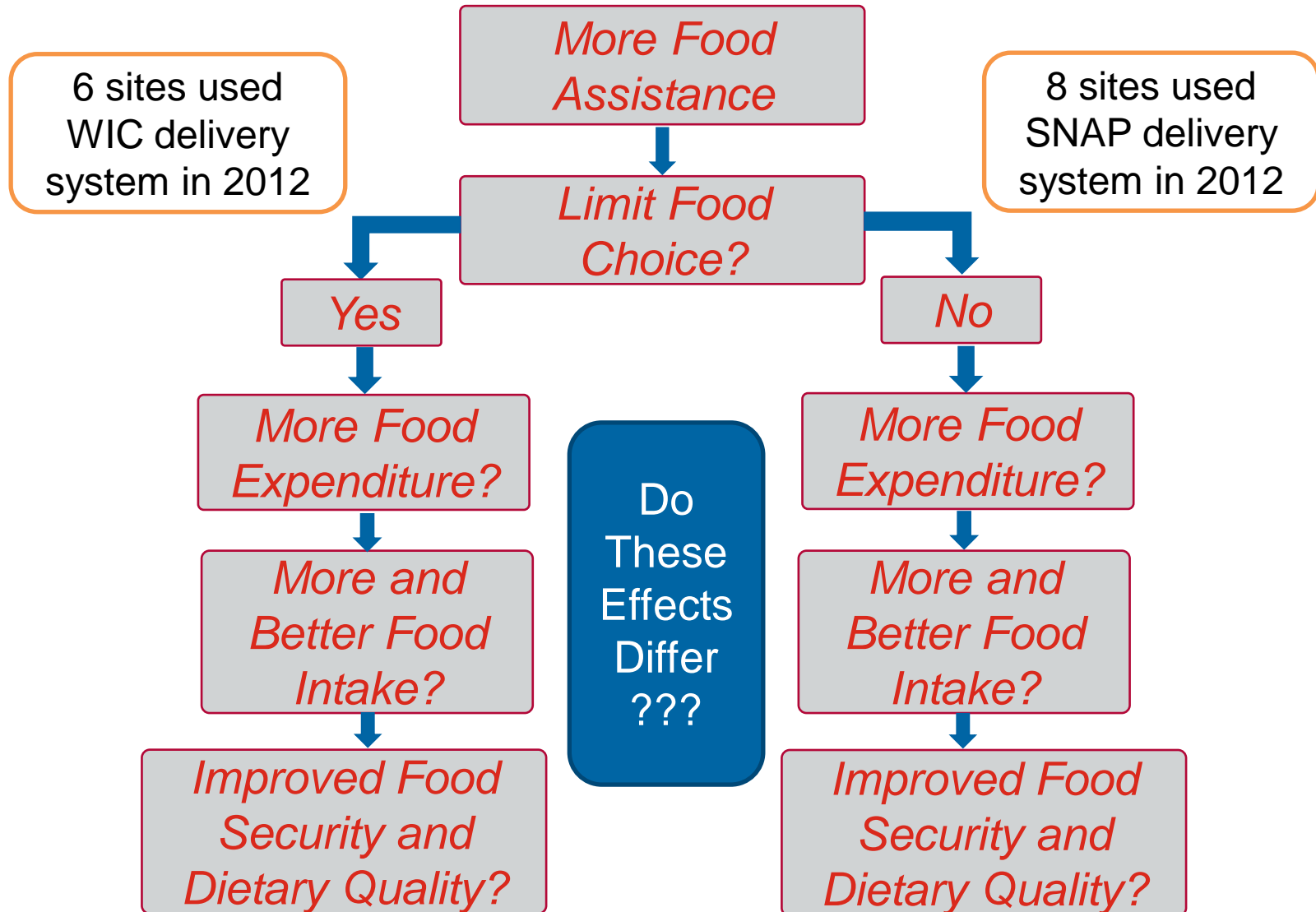
# WIC: Choice Limited to Specific Food Package



# SEBTC Offers Chance to Explore Tradeoff

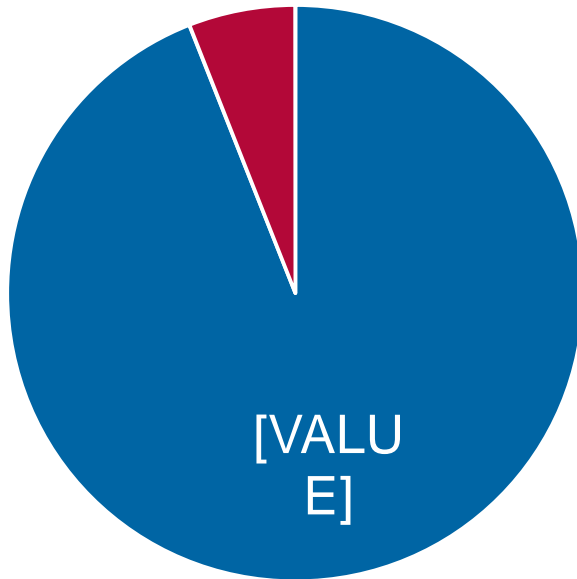


# SEBTC Offers Chance to Explore Tradeoff

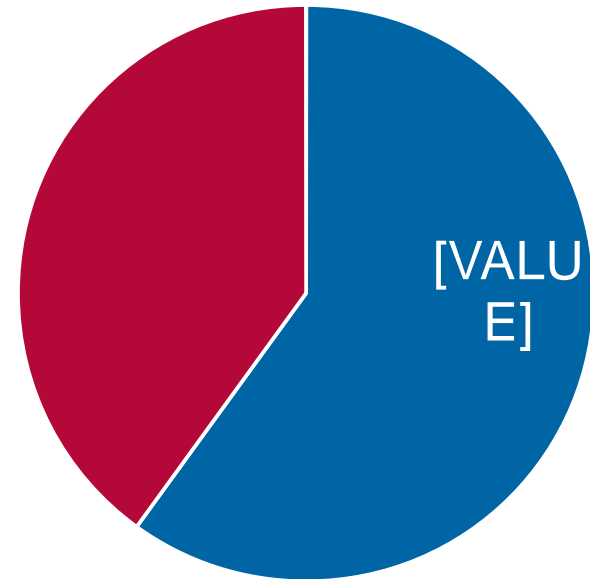


# Less Benefit Use Under Limited Choice

Percentage of Benefits Used:  
SNAP Sites



Percentage of Benefits Used:  
WIC Sites

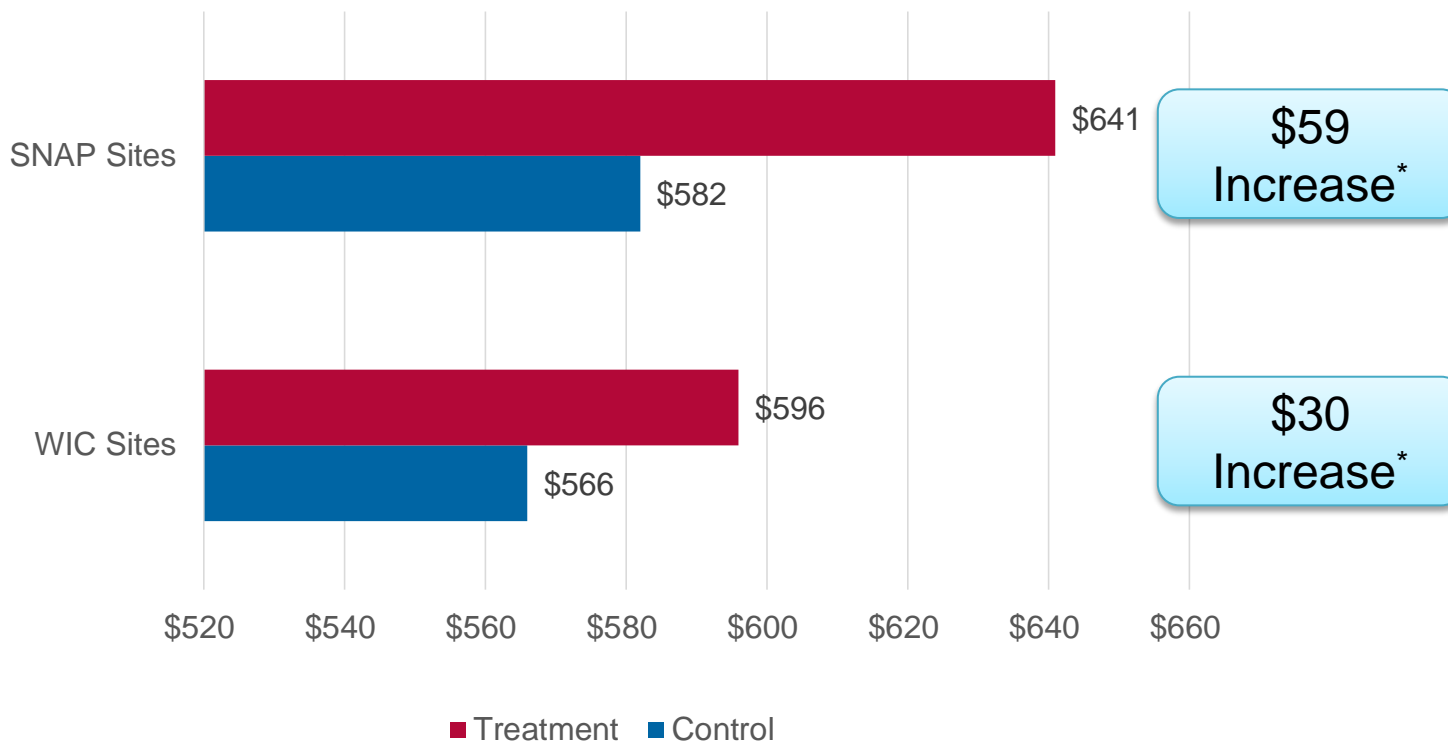


■ % Benefits Used ■ % Benefits Did Not Use

■ % Benefits Used ■ % Benefits Did Not Use

# Smaller (Positive) Increase in Food Expenditures Under Limited Choice

Impacts on Monthly Food Expenditures



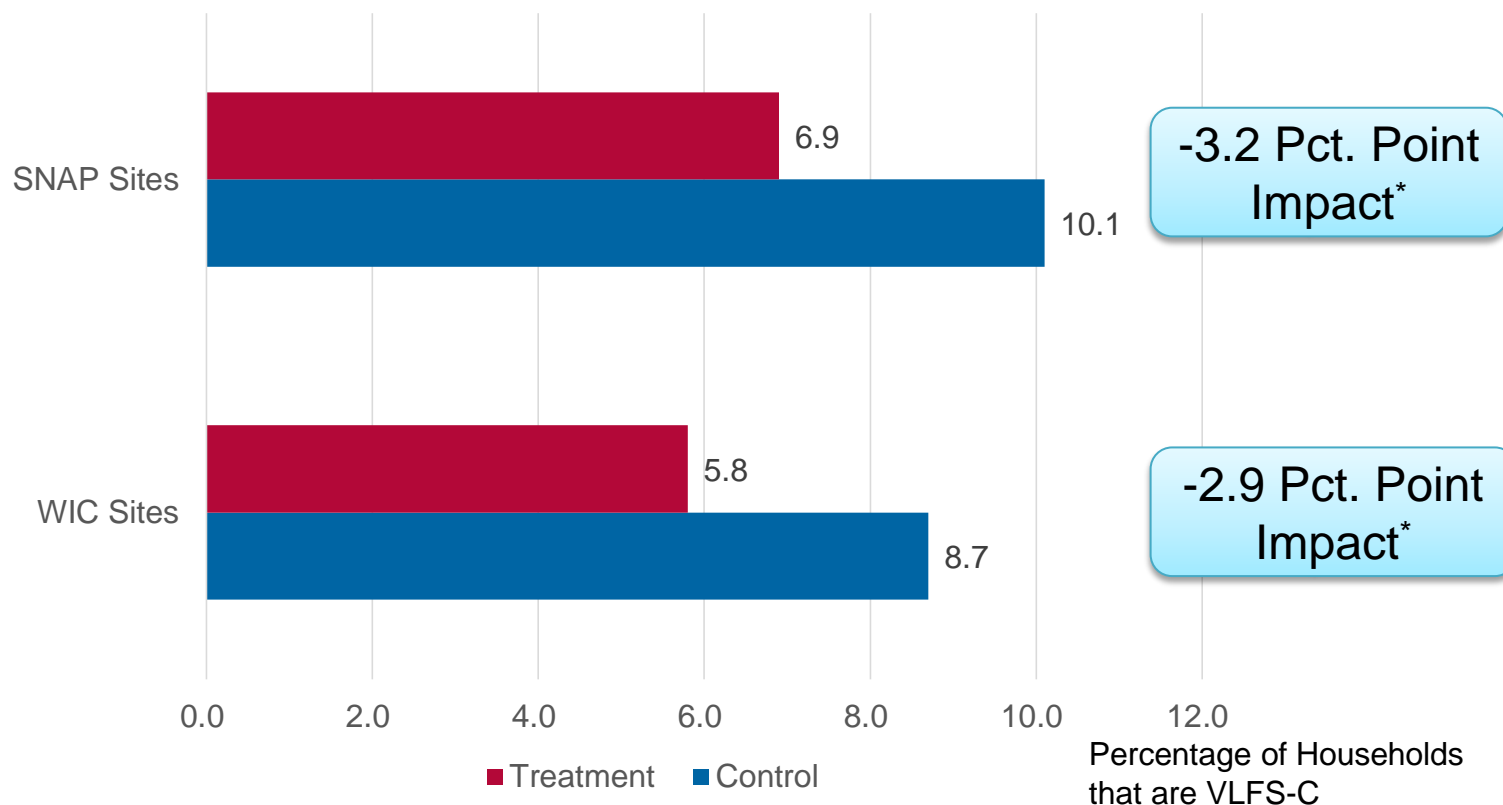
\* Treatment-control difference is statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

Difference in impacts between WIC and SNAP sites is statistically significant at the 0.01 level.



# No Significant Difference in Food Security Impacts

Impacts on Very Low Food Security Among Children (VLFS-C)

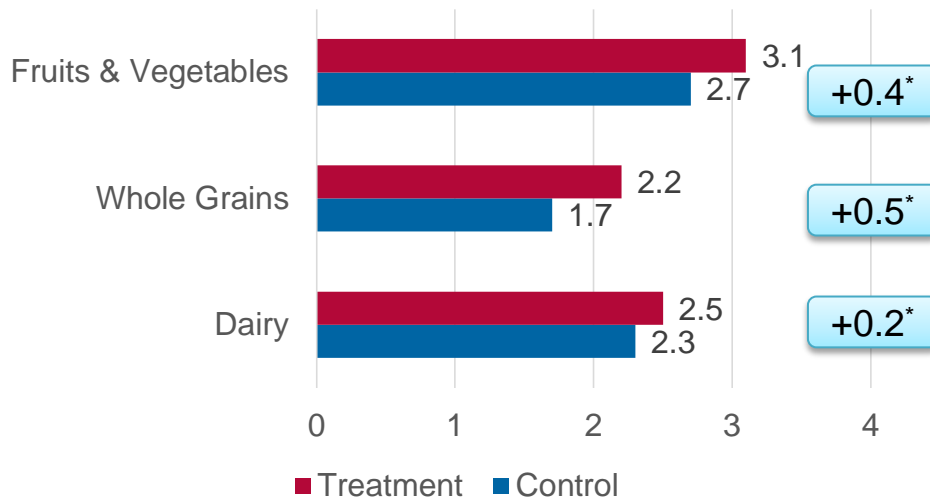


\* Treatment-control difference is statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

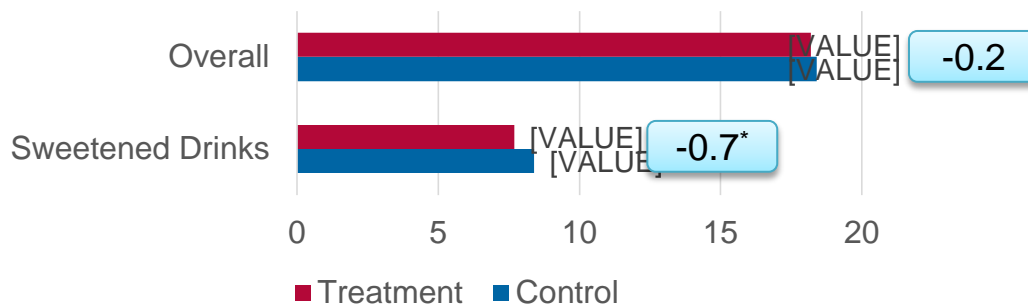
Difference in impacts between WIC and SNAP sites is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

# Favorable SEBTC Impacts on Children's Consumption of Key Food Groups

Overall Impacts: Key Foods  
(daily cup/ounce equiv.)

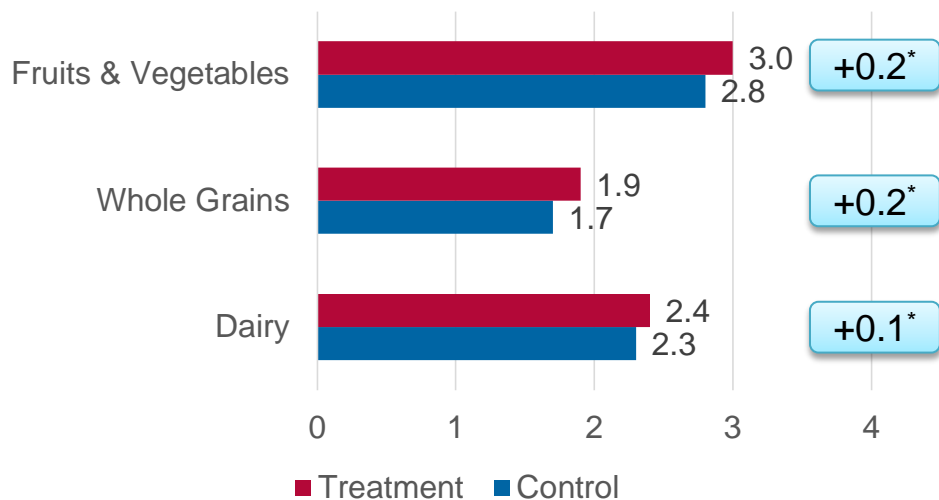


Overall Impacts: Added Sugars  
(daily teaspoons)

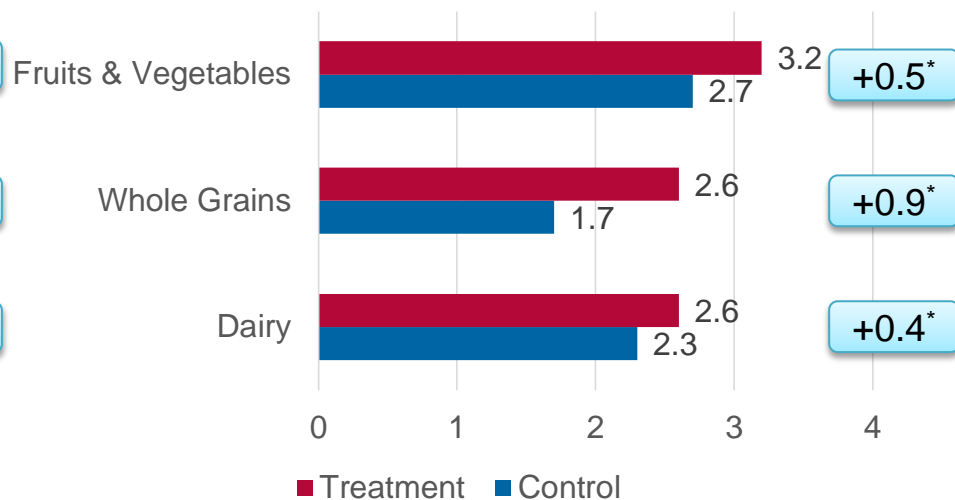


# Impacts Larger Under Limited Choice

Impacts on Key Foods: SNAP  
(daily cup/ounce equiv.)



Impacts on Key Foods: WIC  
(daily cup/ounce equiv.)

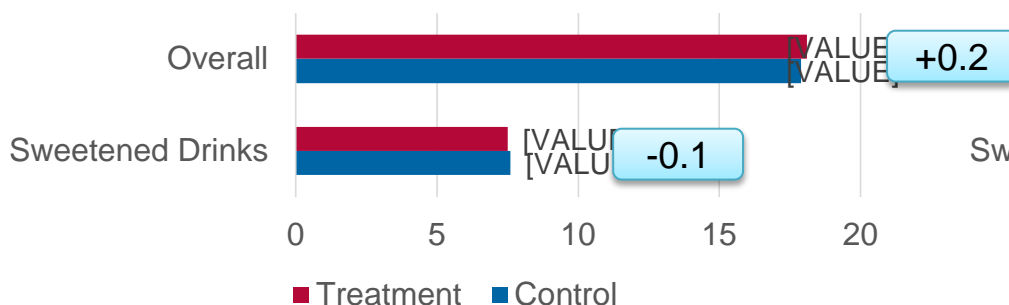


\* Treatment-control difference is statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

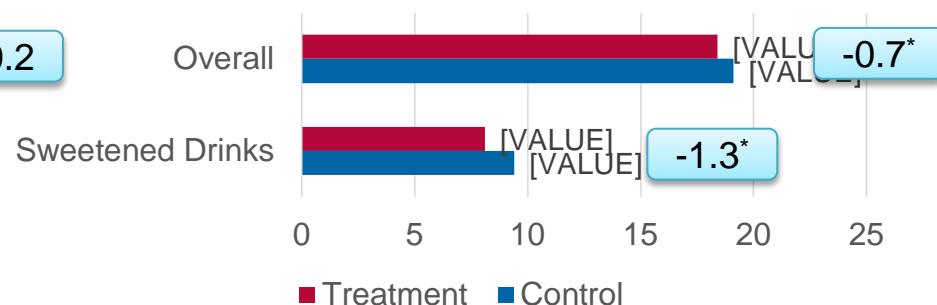
Differences in impacts between WIC and SNAP sites are statistically significant at the 0.01 level for each food group.

# Impacts Larger Under Limited Choice

Impacts on Added Sugars: SNAP  
(daily teaspoons)



Impacts on Added Sugars: WIC  
(daily teaspoons)



\* Treatment-control difference is statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

Differences in impacts between WIC and SNAP sites are statistically significant at the 0.01 level for each food group.

# Summary of Findings

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- **Summer food assistance led to improvements in children's dietary outcomes**
  - Increase in consumption of healthful foods
  - Reductions in added sugars from sweetened beverages
- **Limiting food choice by offering assistance through WIC was associated with ...**
  - Larger positive impacts on children's dietary outcomes
  - Similar impacts on food security
- **...even though limiting choice was also associated with...**
  - Less benefit use
  - Smaller increases in food expenditures