Health & Hunger:
Food Insecurity in Cook County & Across Illinois

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The Impact of Food Insecurity on Children’s Health & Well Being Conference
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What is Food Insecurity?

• Limited or uncertain access to adequate food

• Peaked during the Great Recession, has not fully returned to pre-recession levels

• **12.6% food insecure**, including nearly 200K children in Cook County

**Food insecurity rate across time**

*Source: USDA*
Key points about food insecurity

- Many causes and drivers
- Households typically move in and out of food insecurity
- Food insecurity does not exist in isolation from other needs
- Difficulty meeting basic needs lead to unhealthy coping strategies.
  - Tradeoff decisions between buying healthy food and paying for utilities, transportation, health care, housing, and education.
  - Buying less healthy, but cheaper and more convenient foods.

Food insecurity has severe consequences on health, learning, and quality of life outcomes.

In the past 12 months, GCFD Chicago clients chose between paying for food and paying for:

- Medicine/medical care: 62%
- Utilities: 73%
- Housing: 59%
- Transportation: 67%
- Education: 38%

Source: 2014 Feeding America Hunger in America Study
In the UNITED STATES:

- 40 million people in America, including 2.4 million rural households, struggle with hunger
- 1 in 6 Children may not know where they’ll get their next meal
- Nearly 5 million Senior Citizens currently experience hunger
In ILLINOIS:

- 11.1% of households are food insecure, or struggle to afford a nutritionally-adequate diet
  - Over 1.4 million people
  - One-third of them are children

- 13% of the population live below the poverty line ($25,100 for family of 4)

- 9.2% of elderly live below the poverty ($12,140 for an individual)

- $1 in SNAP benefits generates roughly $1.70 in economic activity
Together, we are...

8 Member Food Banks

5 Branches & Partner Distribution Organizations

2,431 Local Agencies & Feeding Programs

1 Association

190M Meals provided annually to Illinois Residents in 102 counties.
Populations disproportionately affected by food insecurity

Food insecurity rates, United States, 2015/2016; Source: USDA

- National average, general population
- Cook County, general population
- Households with a member age 18-64 with a disability*
- Low income households (<185% FPL)
- Households with children headed by a single woman
- African American, non-Hispanic households
- Households with children headed by a single man
- Hispanic households
- Households with children under age 6
- Households with children
- Women living alone
- Men living alone
- Households with a member age 65+ with a disability

Food insecurity rates: 0% to 40%
About the Greater Chicago Food Depository

- The **Greater Chicago Food Depository is Chicago’s food bank.** Our mission is to provide food for hungry people while striving to end hunger in our community.

- **Since 1979**, the Food Depository has made a daily impact on hunger across Cook County. Last year, the Food Depository **distributed nearly 70 million pounds of food, 38% of which was fresh produce.** Every day we distribute the equivalent of **159,000 meals.**

- We partner with **700+ agencies and programs** including soup kitchens, shelters, food pantries, and programs for children, older adults, and veterans.
How We Work

GREATER CHICAGO FOOD DEPOSITORY

FOOD BANKS
A food bank is the warehouse for millions of pounds of food and other products that go out to the community.

FOOD PANTRIES
A food pantry functions as the arms that reach out to the community directly. Some use mobile food pantries, which reach people in areas of high need.
Neighborhoods disproportionately affected by food insecurity
Children’s Programming: The Need

Quality food is essential for children to learn, grow, and play. Unfortunately, nearly 1 in 5 children in Cook County are at risk of hunger. This struggle affects families with children of all ages, from very young infants to teenagers soon to enter adulthood. Despite this need:

- Only 75% of the Cook County eligible children participated in their school’s free or reduced price lunch program.
- Only 40% of those eligible students accessed school breakfast and
- Only 16% used a summer lunch program.
We partner with schools and community organizations all year to meet children where they are at and ensure that children in our community have the healthy food they need through four main programs:

• **Summer Meals** – Summer Meals Food Service Program - Federal Program
• **Afterschool Meals** - Child and Adult Care Food Program - Federal Program
• **School Breakfast Meals** - Federal School Meals Program
• **School Based Food Pantries** - Healthy Kids Market - GCFD Funded Program
School Based Response - Healthy Student Market

Connects families to healthy food items: These market-style distributions are located in schools and provide nutritious food to students and their families who may not be able to visit a traditional pantry due to work hours or location. In fiscal year 2016-2017, 37 Markets distributed more than 1.6 million pounds of healthful food to more than 3,600 families.

Strengthens school community: Of the 853 parents surveyed during the 2015-2016 school year:
- 70% were found to be at risk of food insecurity
- 87% felt more supported by their child’s school because of the Market
- 78% stated they were more involved in their child’s school community because of the Market
After School Meals: Kids Cafe

Supports enrichment programming: Since 1993, the Food Depository has partnered with after-school programs to provide healthy meals for youth in a safe, nurturing environment. Each Kids Cafe provides nutritious, appealing meals for children and teens —for many the only wholesome meal they may have all day.

• Today, 60 Kids Cafe sites serve youth each day after the school day ends
• In fiscal year 2017-2018, over 369,000 Kids Cafe meals were distributed
• Kids Cafes also provide nutrition education, activities, mentoring and homework assistance
Summer Meals: Partnering with Community Organizations

Ensure meal access year-round: Summer is a difficult time for our families and children. During this time, feeding youth in our community becomes especially important, because those receiving free and reduced-price school meals lose an important source of food. The summer program aims to reach children in convenient neighborhood sites such as libraries, parks and community centers, ensuring their access to nutritious food. In the Summer of 2017:

- Over 560,000 meals distributed at 257 total summer feeding sites
- 37 Chicago Housing Authority sites
- 28 Public Library sites
- 24 GCFD Lunch Bus sites
- 3 Cook County Health and Hospitals System sites
Health & Hunger: Cook County

According to the 2014 Hunger in America study, a significant number of GCFD clients in Cook County are living with health challenges:

• 60% of households include someone with high blood pressure
• 35% of households include someone with diabetes
• 44% of clients consider themselves in fair or poor health
• 73% of clients knowingly purchase inexpensive, unhealthy foods to make ends meet
Food Bank Action towards Chronic Disease

• As obesity and chronic disease rates continue to rise, food banks are rethinking the way they provide food to communities.

• Food banks have begun to encourage healthy dietary practices.

• Food banks are formalizing partnerships with Health Care providers
A Conceptual Framework: Cycle of Food Insecurity & Chronic Disease

Food Insecurity

Household Income

Spending Tradeoffs

Health Care Expenditures

Employability

Stress

Coping Strategies

Dietary Quality
Eating Behaviors
Bandwidth

Chronic Disease

Food Insecurity & Health Care: Cook County
GCFD Healthcare Partner Strategy

In collaboration with our health care partners, we develop a customized strategy, that empowers patients with the knowledge and support to access and use nutritious food that is critical for their health and wellness.

The approach includes:

• Providing **food insecurity training** to healthcare professionals to empower discussions about food access with their patients
• Health care partner **utilizes the Food Insecurity Screening tool**
• Connecting food insecure patients to existing food resources and information about SNAP
• **Providing a food access response** at health partner location
Screening for Food Insecurity

Food insecurity screening questions:

1. Within the past 12 months, I/we worried whether our food would run out before I/we got money to buy more.
   - Often True
   - Sometimes True
   - Never True

2. Within the past 12 months, the food I/we bought just didn’t last and I/we didn’t have money to get more.
   - Often True
   - Sometimes True
   - Never True
Food Insecurity Screening Resources

Response to a positive food insecurity screen:

• Information about benefits
• Referral to a local partner agency
• Access to nutritious, fresh food
Patients receive information about how to connect to the Food Depository Benefits Outreach team for assistance applying for SNAP and/or Medicaid.

GCFD Hotline:

- 773- 843-5416
- M-F 8:30am – 5pm
Public Benefits Outreach Team – Services Provided

- **Phone assistance**
  - Hotline for Cook County residents
  - 3,568 households assisted
- **Onsite assistance**
  - 319 enrollment events
  - 1,266 households assisted
- **Offer case application support** for clients who run into road blocks
  - Relationship with the Department of Human Services
- **Train member agencies** to provide application assistance
  - Currently at 38 agencies
  - In FY17, Network agencies submitted 2,784 applications

Contact our Benefits Outreach Team
To enroll in SNAP and for questions: **773-843-5416**
Online referral form at our website
Member Agency Referral

Patients receive information about how to connect with food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters close to their home.
Food Access at Health Partner Sites: What Can You Do?

Patients that screen positive for food insecurity have an opportunity to connect to fresh, nutritious food at a variety of access points.

Depending on factors like funding, space, frequency and capacity, fresh produce distribution models can be tailored to each individual health system.

Example of responses:

- Screening & Referral
- On-Site Pantry
- Pop Up Pantry
- Mobile Pantry
- Summer Meal Site
- School Partnership
Thank You!

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