

FOOD INSECURITY

How
counties
are tackling
hunger

By Mary Ann Barton
senior staff writer

In Dodge County, Neb., ground has been broken for a new chicken plant that will bring up to 1,000 new jobs to the region. The \$300 million poultry processing center is expected to ship 400,000 birds a day, raised by local farmers, to Costcos around the country.

This region of eastern Nebraska is already home to other meat-processing businesses including the Hormel hog plant, the nation's largest producer of Spam. The meat-packing industry has changed the cultural landscape of the Cornhusker State somewhat, with many workers from Guatemala, Mexico and Honduras settling there to work at the plants.

Ironically, in an area filled with food-related jobs, some of the industry's workers have trouble finding groceries. With little in the way of public transportation, some pockets of the county are food deserts. **See SOS page 10**

SPOTLIGHT ON: FOOD INSECURITY

In addition to the 42 million people across the country who depend on SNAP benefits to eat, there are many more who don't qualify who are considered "food insecure." Solutions in the form of pop-up farmers markets to community gardens to stocking convenience stores with groceries can be found in counties across the country. In this edition of **County News**, we present another report in the **Spotlight series**. This one explores food insecurity in several counties.

If you have an idea for a Spotlight series, contact us at 202.942.4249, or pass along your idea to any NACo staffer.

From SOS page 9

"You've got to bring those services to where they live, work and play," said Kathy Kneifl, an assistant educator with the Nebraska Extension office for Dodge, Saunders and Washington counties in Nebraska, who manages the Healthy Food Retail Recognition program.

The population helped by Kneifl and others in Nebraska are a mix of those who qualify for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) as well as some who do not.

Across the country, about 42 million people use SNAP to purchase food, which costs taxpayers \$64 billion a year. It works out to about \$125 per person per month.

People who face hunger who aren't eligible for SNAP benefits can be found in nearly every county across the country, according to a new report released last month by Feeding America, a non-profit that tracks hunger issues. The report shows families in 97 percent of counties as "food insecure." Food insecurity is a measure defined by the Department of Agriculture as lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members.

For the people who don't qualify for SNAP benefits but can't stretch their dollars enough to buy groceries on a regular basis, they mainly rely on food banks to put food on the table. Feeding America's network of 200 food banks provides about 4 billion meals annually; for every meal Feeding America provides, SNAP provides 12.

Key findings of the new report show that food insecurity exists everywhere — from Jefferson County, Miss., where 36 percent (the highest rate in the study) are food insecure, to Loudoun County, Va., where 4 percent (the lowest rate) are food insecure. Rural and southern counties tend to have the highest rate of food insecurity, according to the findings.

Some counties are getting creative when it comes to making sure their residents don't go without healthy food choices.

Kneifl, in Nebraska's Dodge County, works with convenience stores in food deserts.

At Brady's Meats & Foods, a small grocery and gas station in Dodge County, located in an industrial area down the street from a grain elevator, she has worked with store management to beef up the run-of-the-mill convenience store offerings to add more groceries that the local residents are most likely to buy: cuts of lean beef, more organ meats, fish and rice and beans.

She also holds community events, including at Brady's, where she partnered with a local food truck that regularly does business in the parking lot. With a grant, they were able to purchase meals for residents and brought in interpreters to talk to them about healthy eating.

Food deserts litter the country. With grocery stores located "in town" and no public transportation in outlying areas, it's difficult for some residents in Davidson County, N.C., located about 20 miles south of the Winston-Salem area, to find healthy food choices.

The Davidson County Health Department began cold-calling smaller "quick marts" several years ago asking them to sell local produce with an assist from the county, said Jen Hames, health

education supervisor. In turn, the county offered to furnish the convenience stores with a cooler, produce scales, display racks and signage purchased with grant funds. The stores get the produce from local farms and a wholesale

One of the answers to bringing healthy foods to those in need was a mobile farmer's market.

market.

Three stores are currently participating and one in particular is a "poster child" for the program, Hames said. The store owner "really understood the link between healthy eating and the business side of it and he's community-focused, so it was just a perfect fit with him." Some of the markets, as well as several farmer's markets, take SNAP payments.

For counties trying to help residents who live in food deserts, Hames advises starting by connecting with convenience stores. "Cold calling's not fun — the first one we cold-called said 'No one's going to buy produce from a gas station.' ... It's just boots on the ground."



Chef Otis Wagner and Darcy Groom pause before a cooking lesson at the Veggie Van at a farmer's market in McLennan County, Texas. Photo courtesy of Waco-McLennan Health District

Boots on the ground is what kick-started a food desert study several years ago in a county in Texas. The Waco-McLennan County Texas Health District partnered with Baylor University on the study, to find out the needs of local residents.

"All the grocery stores had moved toward the interstate," said Kelly Craine, public health information specialist with the health district. They went ZIP code by ZIP code, targeting residents who were particularly in need; public health workers and interns fanned out to knock on doors and get some answers. "We did a door to door survey — 'How many vegetables did they eat? How far did they have to go to purchase groceries?'"

One of the answers to bringing healthy foods to those in need was a mobile farmer's market. The health district got a grant to help purchase a van (dubbed the "Veggie Van") for a group called World Hunger Relief, which grows produce on a farm in the county. The Veggie Van sets up several farmer's markets around the county during its weekly stops.

The county spent grant funds to get the word out using paid advertising on billboards, radio and newspaper about the Veggie Van, farmers markets and nutritional cooking classes — some taught by local and celebrity chefs — held at farmer's markets and churches.

A different twist on the Texas county's concept can be found up north in DeKalb County, Ill. where a refrigerated 12-foot produce truck dubbed "The Grow-Mobile" takes fresh produce to pop-up markets across the county each week, according to Moria Nagy, president of the non-profit DeKalb County Community Gardens (DCCG). The truck, which is owned by the non-profit, is also used for educational workshops.

The produce is grown at more than 50 community gardens on 15 acres across the county managed by DCCG. Since 2012, the community gardens have produced more than 100,000 pounds of food for local food pantries, day care centers, schools, community meal

locations, senior citizen centers and housing units, as well as to the Meals on Wheels program.

The community gardens have been in existence for about six years. Being able to take produce to other parts of the county starting last year "was kind of a big step for us," Nagy said.

In addition to produce, the Grow Mobile also offers free food from the Northern Illinois Food Bank, a distribution warehouse, that offers food to food banks donated by local grocery stores. "This is a wonderful resource we were able to tap into," Nagy said.

Another type of mobile market can be found in Tulsa County, Okla., where a former horse trailer was retrofitted into a one-aisle mobile grocery store, said Leslie Carroll, resource development coordinator at the Tulsa County, Okla. Health Department.

The mobile grocery store visits food deserts and was launched by the Healthy Corner Store Initiative, an affiliate of the Tulsa Community Foundation through its subsidiary R&G Family Grocers.

"They really try to pay attention to their customers — if it's a Hispanic community, they try to offer culturally appropriate items such as mangoes," Carroll said. Sixty percent of sales come from SNAP recipients.

The converted 36-foot long refrigerated trailer offers about 600 different food items for sale and last year served 17,000 customers in food deserts around the region. They make about four stops a day from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. and visit 19 locations six days a week.

R&G Family Grocers has a waiting list of areas that want to be added to their route. The owners hope to have a second store up and running by next year. **CN**

The counties featured in this story were among local governments awarded funding from a partnership between the Aetna Foundation, the American Public Health Association and NACo. They joined the Healthiest Cities & Counties Challenge to create a positive health impact.

Follow the trails to fresh food

By Charlie Ban
senior staff writer

Describe a garden and words like tranquil, quiet and refuge spring to mind.

Not so much in Hillsborough County, Fla., where new community gardens are just that: part of a community, with the accompanying noise and foot traffic. Luckily, the plants don't mind. The gardens' visibility is crucial to their integration and their goal: making more fresh produce available as part of a walkable community.

Michele Ogilvie, an executive planner at the county Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), saw as much when she became a community gardener herself. While tending to her eggplants, lost in her task, she was startled to hear people walking, talking and biking nearby.

"I forgot it was right on the trail," she said. "There are people walking right by you."

Many of the gardens are connected by a 23-mile paved multi-use trail that the MPO helped plan at the request of the neighborhoods, many in the city of Tampa. After the trail was completed, Ogilvie said, the neighborhoods, encouraged by the successful partnership, asked for help developing their garden network.

"It's not usual that neighborhoods say 'let me help you — we will find the place, we will feed the people, we will bring the people — all you have to do is show up, listen to us, catalog it and turn it into a plan,'" Ogilvie said. "That's three-quarters of the work. We just had to follow their lead and take care of the planning."

The network is thriving and expanding thanks to that partnership and now the fruits (and vegetables) of that partnership is part of the Aetna Foundation's Healthiest Cities and Counties Challenge, which has awarded a \$10,000 grant to the partnership to further its goals.

"The efforts to improve food quality through our communi-

ty garden coalition, while fostering walkability, bikeability and transit use, will serve as a guide to other communities interested in improving community health through active living," said Lesley "Les" Miller, Jr., a Hillsborough County Commissioner and the MPO chairman.

The gardens themselves are as varied as their neighborhoods, all places where analysis of health and economic indicators saw low income, high rates of chronic disease and no grocery stores or transit options. Some are first-come-first-serve for plots, available for a monthly membership fee. One is maintained by a church, which pledges a certain amount of produce to a local food bank. Another is owned by the Salvation Army, which incorporates gardening into its therapy. All are advertised by wayfinding signs that Ogilvie hopes will en-

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courage interest in the gardens and keep them visible to residents. A few of the gardens took some scouting to find.

"We saw a police substation with a lot of property that wasn't being used," Ogilvie said. "We just asked if they were using it, they weren't, and that's going to be one of our gardens once we remediate the soil."

The gardens can be a bargaining chip with owners of nuisance properties.

"If they agree to let us use their property as a garden for a certain length of time, we can have fines relaxed, and everyone wins," Ogilvie said.

That's an example of how Ogilvie said the MPO and communities can work together.

"Because we're government, we're able to open all types of doors, but they can do far more than we can," she said. "We can get them free meeting spaces

or publish something. They call each other and make sure people show up to do things. We know each other's strengths and it's a true partnership."

She acknowledges that community gardens won't feed everyone, but they are a step in the right direction in offering an opportunity for good soil, water and a place to grow healthy food — all of which are hard to come by in the neighborhoods that

need it the most.

"And it's sustainability at its best," she said. Hillsborough County and 49 other finalists will be judged independently on how their programs effect measurable change in their health determinants — in this case food deserts and walkability — for cash awards ranging from \$25,000 to \$500,000, following an expert site visit and analysis of health indicator data. **CN**



Community gardeners show off the bounty from their plots. Photos courtesy of the Hillsborough County Metropolitan Planning Organization



Students learn urban agriculture at the Tampa Heights Community Garden, once a vacant lot.

Get creative to bring grocers to food deserts

By Charlie Ban
senior staff writer

Grocery stores are a tough enough business as it is, but when combined with the economic challenges in lower-income neighborhoods, running one becomes a high-wire balancing act.

Jefferson County-Louisville, Ky. is hoping to set the stage for opening two grocery stores in urban food deserts and demonstrating the commercial viability in another. Without full-service

grocery stores in these communities, residents are left to patch together food from convenience stores or travel long distances to access fresh produce and other healthy foods.

"Food access is really difficult because you're trying to move a market that doesn't exist," said Theresa Zawacki, senior policy advisor to Louisville Forward, the city and county's economic development agency. "If it did, market sector solutions would take over and government and nonprofits wouldn't need to intervene."

Without home rule powers,

Jefferson County-Louisville, along with counties in similarly-governed states, is unable to offer tax abatements to grocers, which Zawacki said is one of the most effective incentives, without legislative approval.

"By virtue of the legal structure we work in, we have to be really creative in how we engage in grocery development because the financial tools are just not available to us."

Louisville Forward is doing that by removing one of prospective grocers' largest impediments

— real estate. Real estate is the most challenging part of getting a grocery store to locate in a food desert, Zawacki said, because of the specific requirements in the building to allow for floor drains, insulation for freezers and other features, along with the parking lot capacity to serve enough customers. Make such a building available at low- or no-cost, and Louisville Forward reduces the risk for a grocer.

"It takes a piece of the funding puzzle out of the equation," Zawacki said. "The cost of the construction can be a pretty

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"SUPER" MARKETS

Theresa Zawacki pointed to several factors crucial to bringing grocery stores to food deserts:

- Is the store perceived to have good prices?
- Can you get what you want?
- Is it nearby?
- Is the building accessible, both to people with disabilities and using public transit?
- Does the operator have experience marketing to low- and moderate-income customers?

serious impediment," she said. "If you're thinking about going into a neighborhood where your margins will be small because your per-basket costs are going to be lower, building costs are enough to scare you away."

Two Louisville stores saw

their markets disappear, leading them to close and create food deserts. One was less than one-fifth the size of a competing store that went far beyond the traditional grocery model and another failed to make upgrades that would have kept its most vulnerable customers in the store. Louisville Forward acquired those buildings and is trying to find tenants.


In one, a community organization hopes to install a commercial kitchen for a meal program, offer job training services and sell grab-and-go meals. The other is suited more for a traditional grocery store.

"The market for grocery retail has very small margins across the board and so (for the county) it really comes down to setting the stage for an operator that has a model that works for low- and moderate-income customers and helping to identify all the ways to help that operator get comfortable in a location and up and running for the community," Zawacki said. "Louisville Forward makes the connection, and in many ways serves as the community development partner in much the same

ways that a traditional for-profit developer would try to line up tenants, try to line up financing, try to line up a use mix that (finances operations) and serves the neighborhood."

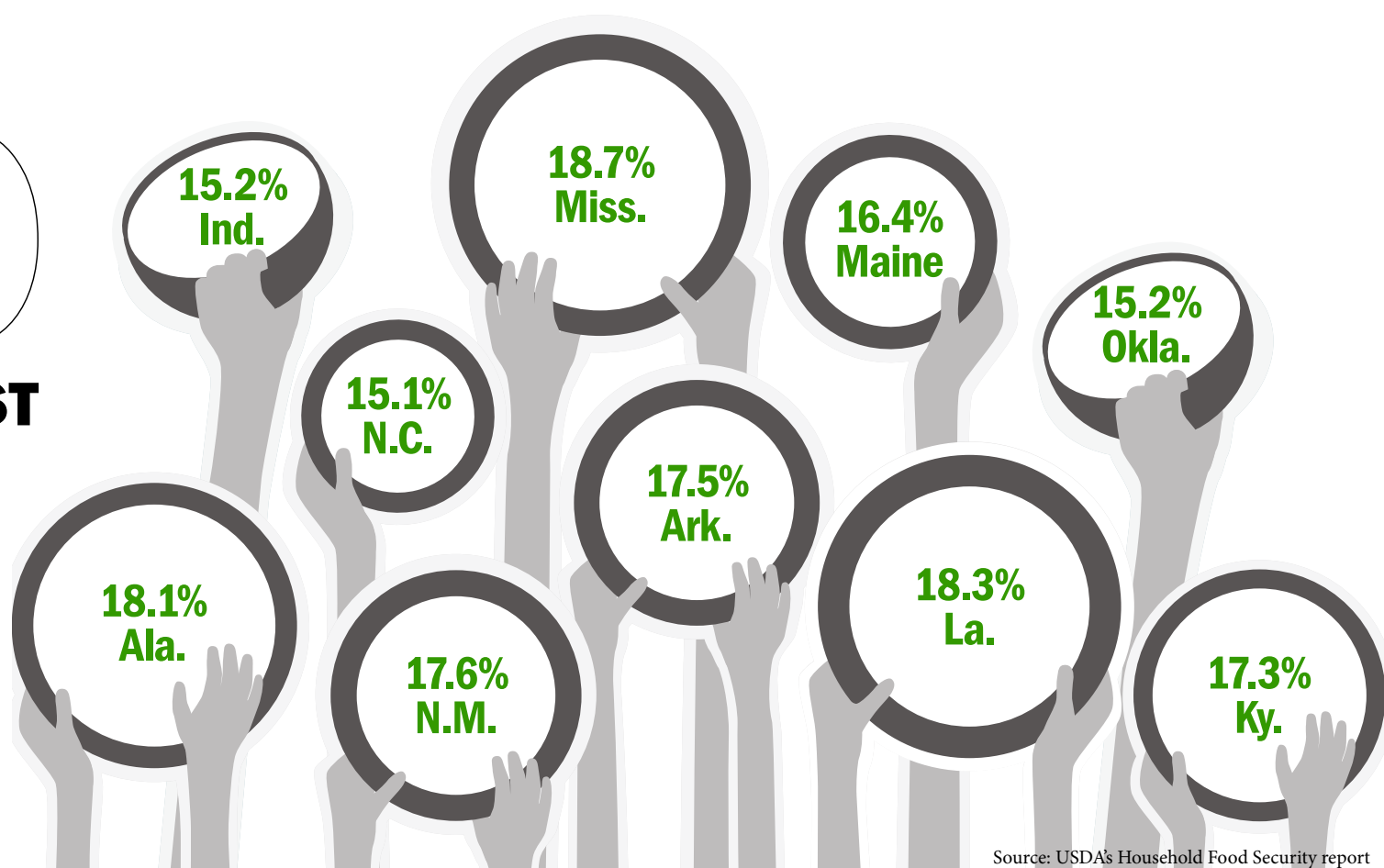
Where there was no existing grocery store, Louisville Forward is hoping to show a demand for one. A collaboration between Louisville Forward, Catholic Charities and the Dare to C.A.R.E. heart health screening program will maintain a standalone freezer and cooler at a Dare to C.A.R.E. drop site, dubbed "The Oasis," where fresh and frozen meat and vegetables will be available at wholesale cost.

The location is at the juncture of three distressed neighborhoods, with 15 percent - 30 percent unemployment and high participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

"We hope we can demonstrate that retail grocery has a space in the market that people might not think about when they are thinking about where to locate their grocery stores," Zawacki said. "If we show there's demand, it's an easier sell to the right grocer." 

10 HUNGRIEST STATES IN THE U.S.

Percentage of American households that were food insecure at least some time in 2016



Source: USDA's Household Food Security report

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Rural areas see highest SNAP participation

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the nation's first line of defense against hunger and a key weapon for assisting low-income Americans and low-income communities.

It is critical for counties, including rural counties, many of which are especially hard hit by poverty and food insecurity.

Nearly 16 percent of all people in nonmetropolitan areas lived below the federal poverty line in 2016, in contrast with just over 12 percent of all people in metropolitan areas.

Households in rural counties (16 percent) participate in SNAP more often than those located in small town counties (15 percent) and metropolitan counties (13 percent), according to Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) analysis.

Receipt of SNAP benefits significantly promotes health and well-being in rural counties, based on research on SNAP nationally. SNAP's impacts include better dietary intake; in-

creased probability of reporting excellent or good health; and decreased health care spending, incidence of metabolic syndrome (e.g., obesity, diabetes, hypertension), and visits to doctors by adults and hospitals by children.

SNAP bolsters rural economies through normal streams of commerce. It benefits all parts of the food chain: farmers, producers, truckers, food retailers and grocery clerks.

Nationally, the Department of Agriculture has estimated that each \$1 of federally-funded SNAP benefits generates \$1.79 in economic activity.

Given the thin margins on which so many food retailers operate, SNAP redemptions help local food retail establishments to be economically viable.

In so doing, those substantial SNAP redemptions help maintain local food access in rural counties for both SNAP and non-SNAP residents.

SNAP benefits and other

SPEEDREAD

Of the 77 counties nationwide with SNAP participation levels at or above 30 percent of all households, more than two-thirds (69 percent) are rural counties.

Out of the 25 counties across the country with the highest percentage of SNAP-participating households, 21 are rural.

program resources contribute to comprehensive economic development strategies to grow jobs and opportunities in rural counties.

SNAP responds to changes in need, whether due to economic downturns or natural disasters. Rural counties are among those that have been hard hit by natural disasters in recent years.

From wildfires to Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, rural residents in California, Texas and Florida were among

those whose recovery was assisted by benefits through the quick-responding program Disaster SNAP in 2017.

Although SNAP participation is higher in rural areas, barriers that often prevent many more eligible rural households from accessing benefits include lack of information about SNAP, transportation barriers and limited resources/abilities to complete the required application processes.

To maximize SNAP's efficacy and reach in rural areas, six strategies can help residents to more easily access SNAP:

- Education and application assistance
- Mobile technologies and other tools to ease access to SNAP offices
- Exercising SNAP policy options to serve more working poor and other rural residents
- Practices to connect older adults to SNAP
- Plans for Disaster-SNAP to respond to future natural di-

sasters; and

- Ancillary SNAP resources for employment and training.

Rural county officials can provide leadership to make sure their counties are not leaving federal SNAP dollars on the table.

They can work with their federal and state government partners to adopt appropriate SNAP policies and practices that better meet their communities' needs.

They can convene community stakeholders to undertake SNAP informational efforts.

They can visit locations where individuals are screened for SNAP eligibility and farmer's markets and other food retailer locations where SNAP clients redeem their benefits.

CN

For technical assistance on these and other strategies to leverage SNAP resources for rural counties, contact Michelle Price at NACo, mprice@naco.org or FRAC at www.frac.org.



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Food Insecurity: Finding Homegrown Solutions

By **Garth N. Graham, MD**

The single biggest factor impacting your health today isn't something you'll find in a DNA kit or even during a routine physical. The answer is much closer to home. According to the CDC, a person's ZIP code is a greater predictor of their health and life expectancy than other factors, including genetics.

Access to healthy food, public safety and environmental factors are all part of the story and are more visible to a person's local county officials than their doctor. These factors are called social determinants of health (SDOH); they are becoming increasingly influential to our health as individuals and as communities.

At the Aetna Foundation, one determinant we are focused heavily on is increasing access to healthy foods. Ensuring easy access to farmers' markets and community gardens and making it easier for people to get to their local grocery store can help lower health issues related to obesity, such as diabetes.

While many of us are lucky enough to have full pantries and fridges, a large portion of the country is not as fortunate. More than 23 million Americans, including 6.5 million children, live in food deserts — places where fresh fruit and vegetables (and healthy foods in general) are largely inaccessible. A significant percentage of this group lives in low-income neighborhoods, both urban and rural.

This is a national problem, but the solutions are unique to each community and are growing in our own backyards. Through the Healthiest Cities & Counties Challenge, a partnership between the Aetna Foundation, the American Public Health Association and the National Association of Counties, we're empowering local communities to solve

the most pressing issues impacting their societies.

Most recently, our organizations recognized 15 communities making a particularly hard-hitting impact — several of which are working to fight nutrition issues and food insecurity. For example, in Waco-McClennan County, Texas, the county is helping increase access to healthy foods through a non-profit grocery store in an identified food desert. Together, they're bringing fresh foods to underserved communities through a "Veggie Van" and hosting workshops at the Waco Downtown Farmer's Market to pique interest in healthy food options.

In Leon County, Fla., the iGrow Food Network donated more than 100 pounds of fresh produce within a 60-day peri-

od, involved youth in summer camps and have reached more than 200 households in designated food desert areas.

Access to healthy food remains a pressing issue when it comes to determining the health of individuals and communities. We all have a role to play in combating the negative social determinants of health impacting individuals living in our cities and counties. Through our work with NACo, we are seeing that the best solutions to food insecurity are growing in our own backyards — in counties across the country. **CN**

Dr. Graham is president of the Aetna Foundation and vice president of Community Health for Aetna, Inc. He is also a cardiologist and public health expert.



FOOD INSECURITY BY HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

The prevalence of food insecurity varied considerably among household types in 2016.

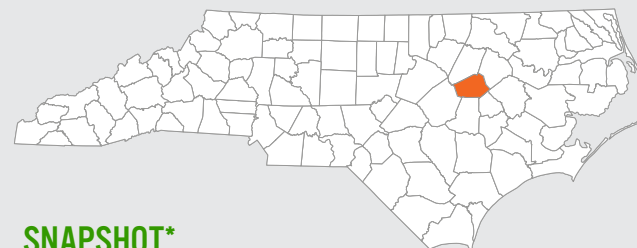
Rates of food insecurity were higher than the national average for the following groups:

- **All households with children** (16.5 percent),
- **Households with children under age 6** (16.6 percent),
- **Households with children headed by a single woman** (31.6 percent),
- **Households with children headed by a single man** (21.7 percent),
- **Women living alone** (13.9 percent),
- **Men living alone** (14.3 percent),
- **Black, non-Hispanic households** (22.5 percent),
- **Hispanic households** (18.5 percent), and
- **Low-income households with incomes below 185 percent of the poverty threshold** (31.6 percent; the Federal poverty line was \$24,339 for a family of four in 2016).

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service

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WILSON COUNTY, N.C.



SNAPSHOT*

2017 Population: 81,700

2016 Unemployment Rate: 8.1%

2016 SNAP Recipient Households: 6,118

2016 Poverty Rate: 22.3% | 2016 Childhood Poverty: 35.8%

GOAL

The Wilson County Department of Social Services is working to increase efficiency of service delivery in order to better promote safety, self-determination and self-sufficiency for the residents in Wilson County, N.C.

SOLUTIONS

- Developed a "Self-Service Express Center" to increase the efficiency of SNAP and Medicaid applications and decrease case worker burden. Recognizing that many individuals and families need both programs, the county worked with a programmer to develop a joint application for SNAP and Medicaid services to further streamline the application process.
- Created a call center to address client needs and concerns. The dual goal of the call center is to efficiently resolve client and applicant issues and connect callers with a "real voice." The department is constantly evaluating the call center to improve delivery and reduce wait and service times.
- Piloted a lobby redesign initiative intended to create a built environment that is more conducive to efficient, comprehensive delivery of services. Once the redesign is completed, participants will be able to see case workers right in the lobby for quick-paced, "one-and-done" transactions—including first-time applications, changes to existing services and recertification.
- Established a "Ticket-to-Work" job fair at which indi-

viduals who have been designated as "ready to work" by a social worker or community partner can seek employment. The department also provides after-placement coaching to increase likelihood that participants will remain employed.

SUCCESSES AND OUTCOMES

- 77% of SNAP and nearly 60% of Medicaid walk-ins use the self-service kiosks. Case workers have started using the joint application for their one-on-one services, and report that it cuts their time with clients by 50%
- 80% of call-in customer needs are resolved through the call center
- The Wilson County Department of Social Services has reported an 80% reduction in TANF participation in the county

TIPS FOR OTHER COUNTIES

- **Be mission-driven.** Create a simple, clear mission statement that your employees and partners can understand and champion.
- **Focus on outcomes:** Once you have your organization aligned under one mission, determine clear indicators for success and build mechanisms for evaluation into your programs and initiatives.

Data Source: County Explorer
www.NACo.org/CountyExplorer

FOOD INSECURITY

Food Insecure in the United States

41,204,000

Percent of U.S. Population Food Insecure

13%

Average Meal Costs

\$3.00

Annual Food Budget Shortfall

\$21,122,544,000

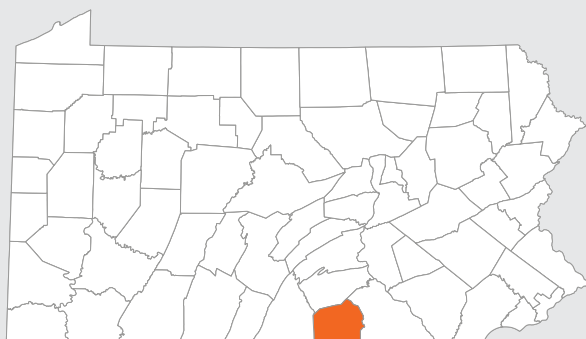


Source: Map the Meal Gap, Feeding America

SPOTLIGHT ON:

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ADAMS COUNTY, PA.



Residents purchase fruit at a local farmer's market.

Photo courtesy of Adams County, Pa.

SNAPSHOT*

2017 Population: 102,300

2016 Unemployment Rate: 4.0%

2016 SNAP Recipient Households: 2,982

2016 Poverty Rate: 9.4% | 2016 Childhood Poverty: 14.0%

GOAL

Healthy Adams County's Food Policy Council — established in 2009 by proclamation of Adams County's Board of Commissioners — strives to ensure that all Adams County residents can access safe, nutritious and affordable food.

SOLUTIONS

- Through the Double Dollars program, the Adams County Farmer's Market matches up to \$15 daily in SNAP benefits, doubling participants' buying power for healthy foods.
- With funding support from the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) grant program, Healthy Adams County was able to provide a "Veggie Bucks" program for SNAP participants, providing a 50% discount on all fresh fruits and vegetables sold through a partnership with a local grocery store — Kenzie's Market. Veggie Bucks could be

applied to the five most expensive produce items at the point of sale. Through this program, the county sought to increase the number of healthy foods purchased by SNAP recipients and help familiarize participants with fresh fruits and vegetables. The program was provided during the winter months of 2017 and 2018.

- The Healthy Options Voucher Program was established to increase food security for residents in the food gap — individuals and families who are living on the cusp of SNAP eligibility (within 160 percent–250 percent of poverty level). Through this program, participants receive \$45 per month to use in the Adams County Farmer's Market. During the winter months, participants can use their vouchers at Kenzie's Market. Participants also receive nutrition education as a part of this program.

SUCCESSES AND OUTCOMES

- 70% of Veggie Bucks program participants reported increased fruit and vegetable consumption; over 30% tried new fruits and vegetables
- Healthy Adams County reports a 96% redemption rate for Healthy Options vouchers, with 75% of voucher funds spent on fruits and vegetable

TIPS FOR OTHER COUNTIES

- **Develop partnerships before you begin.** Involve stakeholders in your vision from the beginning to ensure that your goals are shared and there is that investment and shared expertise from the outset.
- **When it comes to goal-setting, quality trumps quantity.** Set one to two feasible goals. This tip is especially important for rural counties that may lack capacity.

**All data from NACo County Explorer:*

www.NACo.org/CountyExplorer