



STATE OF HUNGER



Pennsylvania

2013



Find out what hunger looks like in your county and how families can get the help they need.

Visit www.hungerreportpa.com for more on all 67 counties.



Prepared by the Coalition Against Hunger
www.hungercoalition.org



Who is affected by food insecurity in Pennsylvania? What resources are available to people living with it? Most importantly, what more can we do to make sure they get the help that they need? These are some of the questions this report aims to answer.

NEARLY 1.6 MILLION.

That's the number of people in Pennsylvania who struggle to put food on the table every year.

More precisely, that figure represents the 1 in 8 residents considered to be "food insecure." That means they don't always have access to the food they need for an active, healthy life, according to the USDA.¹

Hunger exists in each of Pennsylvania's 67 counties, though it's easy to overlook. You probably wouldn't know that a co-worker often goes home to an empty refrigerator. Or that the boy in your child's class can't concentrate because he hasn't had breakfast. Or that the cashier at your grocery store worries about being able to pay for enough food for his own family.

The recession thrust many families into situations they would have never imagined. Many lost their jobs, their savings, their homes. Families have made painful decisions on what they can cut back. And when there's barely enough money to pay the mortgage and keep the heat on, food is often the first sacrifice they make.

Hunger is an overwhelming issue, but it's a solvable one. Pennsylvania is rich in agricultural resources, with plenty of food to nourish every resident. The question is: **How can we ensure that enough nutritious food reaches the plates of those who can't afford it?**

As a state, we can no longer afford to avoid this question. Growing food insecurity means increased risk for serious illness and chronic disease among more residents, which can drive up healthcare costs for us all. For children, the effects of food insecurity can be devastating, threatening their development and ability to learn in school and reducing their chances of becoming successful adults. Not surprisingly, hunger is also linked with obesity, because many families stretch their budgets by buying cheaper, high-calorie foods with little nutritional value. **It has been estimated that hunger in Pennsylvania costs more than \$6 billion a year**, including preventable health care costs as well as lost economic productivity and educational attainment.²

\$6.12 BILLION

Annual cost of hunger for PA, including avoidable health care costs, lost economic productivity, more expensive public education because of poor education outcomes, and the cost of charities to feed families.

Fortunately, we have the tools to fight hunger—a strong safety net of nutrition programs for those who need it. Every day, SNAP (food stamps) and the WIC (Women, Infants and Children) Program help hundreds of thousands of low-income families buy food at the grocery store. School meals and the child care food program ensure children have nourishment to thrive physically and academically. And food distribution programs supply charities with nonperishable goods, fresh produce and other foods to feed the needy in their communities. **These government-funded programs provide 96 percent of all food assistance in the United States, compared with 4 percent provided by charities alone.**

FOOD ASSISTANCE ³

Provided by Charities	4%
Provided by Government Nutrition Programs	96%

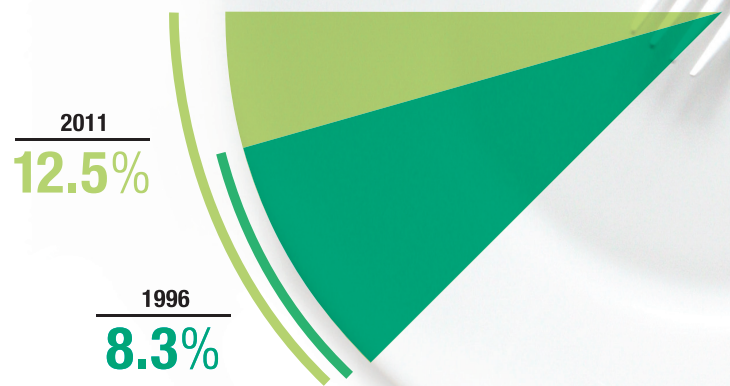
To more effectively fight hunger, Pennsylvania must increase access to these underutilized programs and work to strengthen this safety net.

To see what these programs mean to people in your county, visit www.hungerreportpa.com. Explore our interactive map, which for the first time, makes data available on participation in major nutrition programs for all 67 counties in Pennsylvania. Although the number of people receiving food assistance has swelled in recent years, programs like SNAP are underused. For instance, one in five Pennsylvania residents who qualify for SNAP are not participating in the program. **That's roughly 470,000 Pennsylvanians who aren't getting the help they need.**⁴

Considering the importance of federal nutrition programs, lawmakers should work to improve their effectiveness and increase access for those who need it most. But that hasn't been the case: Nutrition programs continue to face funding cuts in Washington. In 2010, Congress slashed \$14 billion from SNAP. As a result, starting this fall, a family of four will see their SNAP benefits reduced by around \$25 a month.⁵ Members of Congress are now considering billions of dollars in additional cuts as they wrangle over deficit reduction.

At the state level, Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Corbett and the General Assembly are negotiating a state budget that will also reduce low-income residents' ability to put food on the table. Last year, Pennsylvania lawmakers eliminated the General Assistance program, which served as **the sole source of income for 70,000 of the state's most vulnerable residents**, including people with disabilities and domestic violence survivors. The governor also imposed an asset test for SNAP, barring low-income families with modest savings (\$5,500 for most households) from qualifying for benefits.

FOOD INSECURITY OVER TIME IN PA ^{6,7}



As Pennsylvania's elected officials debate state and federal budgets in the coming months, reducing hunger must be a priority. Ensuring that all residents have the food they need is one of the wisest investments we can make.

Consider this report a primer on the nutrition programs that keep people from going hungry every day. It's not just for lawmakers or social service agencies. It's for all Pennsylvania citizens who want to get involved or, at the very least, know more about hunger in their own backyard.

The report concludes with recommendations on how each one of us—public officials, nonprofit organizations, businesses, faith-based groups and ordinary citizens—can take action to support the programs that feed needy members in our community.

Visit www.pahungerreport.com for:

- An interactive map with hunger data for all 67 counties
- Downloadable fact sheets on each county
- Tools to take action on hunger issues
- Where to find help in your county

SNAP (FOOD STAMPS)

America's most important program in the fight against hunger.

Officially Known as: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, it was renamed SNAP in 2008.

How it Helps:

More than 46 million low-income Americans rely on SNAP to help them afford the food they need, making the program the nation's largest and most effective in fighting hunger.

Nearly three-quarters of participants are in families with children, and more than 1 in 4 participants live in households with seniors or people with disabilities.⁸

FACT:

3/4 of people who use SNAP leave the program within two years.

SNAP was designed to respond quickly during economic downturns and other crises. **Since the recession began in 2007, the number of Pennsylvanians participating in SNAP grew by more than 50 percent.** As unemployment benefits ran out for many residents, SNAP served as a lifeline that allowed them to continue to feed their families. Today, nearly **1 in 7 Pennsylvanians participate in the program**—a figure expected to decline as the economy recovers.



SNAP is particularly crucial for children, **servicing half of all U.S. kids before age 20.**⁹ Multiple studies have shown that kids who don't get enough nutritious food face higher risks for developmental delays and are more likely to get sick and perform poorly in school.

While food banks typically provide families with pre-packed boxes of foods, SNAP allows participants to buy foods that fit their families' needs. What's more, SNAP benefits are funded by the federal government, so **the program annually pumps more than \$2.7 billion into Pennsylvania's economy**, as families spend their benefits at grocery stores, farmers' markets and small businesses throughout the Commonwealth. According to economist Mark Zandi of Moody's, **every \$1 in SNAP benefits generates \$1.73 in economic activity.**¹⁰

24%

adults caring for children

47%
children

WHO GETS SNAP?

11

17%

seniors and people with disabilities

The Basics:

Eligibility for SNAP is based on a household's income, resources, expenses and household size. A family of four, for instance, would have to earn less than \$36,876 a year to qualify. Benefits used to be issued as paper stamps, but now they come on an Access card, which works like a debit card and can be used at most grocery stores and other food retailers. SNAP benefits can only buy cold, unprepared foods as well as spices and seeds to grow food.

The Challenges:

Despite the growing number of Pennsylvanians enrolled in SNAP, **there are still nearly 470,000 eligible residents who don't participate.** There are several reasons for this: Many people don't realize they qualify, especially if they've never needed help before. Others, including many seniors, don't apply because they're embarrassed or worry about the social stigma they may encounter. People often grow discouraged by the application process, which can be frustrating and confusing for some applicants.

ONE IN FIVE

of eligible Pennsylvanians who don't receive SNAP

Meanwhile, government officials continue to enact state and federal legislation that undermines SNAP's ability to respond to increased need. In 2010, for example, Congress cut more than \$14 billion from SNAP to fund other priorities and has since proposed additional cuts. In Pennsylvania, the state imposed an asset test for SNAP in 2012, disqualifying from the program thousands of seniors and families with modest savings.

What's Next:

Currently, **the average SNAP participant in Pennsylvania receives just \$127** in food assistance a month—less than \$5 a day. When the \$14 billion in cuts take effect this fall, participants will see their benefits reduced. A family of four will lose around \$25 per month.

And Congress is now considering cutting even more from the program. These cuts would be part of the Farm Bill, a comprehensive piece of legislation that sets national policy on agriculture and nutrition programs. Both the House and Senate versions of the Farm Bill propose billions in cuts to SNAP, which would harm millions of Americans and many communities across the country. Under one version of the bill, **as many as 5 million Americans could be dropped from the program.**¹²

real stories:

Andrea Lockhart, 43
residential manager - Pittsburgh, Allegheny County
Marjorie Tretta, 70
private duty nurse - Wilmerding, Allegheny County

Founded in 1986, the nonprofit Just Harvest advocates for a strong and compassionate safety net for low-income residents in Allegheny County. In 2007, Just Harvest launched its SNAP outreach and enrollment assistance program and has since helped more than 6,000 households apply for benefits.

We spoke with two of their clients who enrolled in the program last fall. Andrea lives with her three daughters, ages 10, 16 and 18. Marjorie lives with her 25-year-old grandson, who she's cared for since he was a child. Neither Andrea nor Marjorie had ever applied for food assistance before.

ON WHY THEY APPLIED FOR SNAP:

Andrea: I was laid off in 2011. Then I got a job working part time, but it was just very hard maintaining a budget to the point where I had to choose between paying a bill and feeding my family. I'm only getting 26 hours a week at \$8 an hour. I fell behind on my rent, and the landlord said, "You gotta go."

Marjorie: My grandson and I both lost our jobs about four months ago—maybe two weeks apart. It was horrifying. Food has been the biggest problem we have. Somehow I pay the bills, but there's never any money left for food. I'm a diabetic, and you're limited to how many carbohydrates you're supposed to have. We were eating spaghetti every night.

ON HOW SNAP HAS HELPED:

Andrea: I'm so thankful I have food stamps. The beautiful thing about SNAP is that even in the midst of practically being homeless, I could still feed my kids. Before, I'd have to buy Oodles of Noodles, rice and starches that my wages would permit me to buy. Now that I have SNAP, I'm buying fresh veggies and cooking more healthy meals.

Marjorie: We got a limited amount of food stamps—\$132 a month—but it's helped. Now I can buy things like yogurt and bananas for breakfast. I buy some meat now, which is good.

ON WHAT THEY'D TELL ELECTED OFFICIALS ABOUT CUTTING SNAP:

Andrea: I took pride in being able to use my money to buy food for my kids. But as I had to make rent, car payments, gas, electric, I had to make choices. I would tell lawmakers not to cut food stamps, so that kids could get the vitamins and nutrition they need and so consumers can pay their bills on time, which is good for the economy, too.

Marjorie: They ought to know what the real world looks like. What would we do to supplement those cuts? Eat cereal all day? Like I said, it would come down to every month, when I do manage to pay the bills, I'd worry, "Now what am I gonna do about the food?"

SCHOOL MEALS

Ensuring all Pennsylvania students get the nutritious food they need to succeed in school.

Officially Known As: National School Lunch Program and National School Breakfast Program

How it Helps:

Both programs ensure that all low-income children can get healthy meals at school for free or at a reduced price, depending on the family's income. The USDA recently updated the nutrition guidelines for school meals so that they reflect the latest nutrition science. Studies have shown that participation in school breakfast has positive effects on children's academic performance, attendance, behavior and health.¹³

The Basics:

To qualify for free or reduced-price meals, families typically must fill out an application to demonstrate that they meet the program's income requirements. Families who already receive SNAP, cash assistance, or certain types of Medical Assistance are automatically enrolled for free school meals through a process known as direct certification. In Philadelphia, a unique program known as "universal feeding" enables all children attending schools that serve a large percentage of low-income families to receive free school meals without an application.

Only 44% of low-income kids who eat school lunch also receive school breakfast.

The Challenges:

More than half of low-income students who receive free or reduced-price lunches continue to miss out on the benefits of school breakfast, for several reasons:

- Some schools and even entire school districts in Pennsylvania don't offer school breakfast at all.
- Many schools offer breakfast only in the cafeteria before the school day begins, which can have the effect of singling out and stigmatizing low-income children.
- Some students don't arrive at school in time to participate in breakfast when it's only available before the bell.

What's Next:

In recent years, many schools and school districts have rethought the way they serve breakfast to children, with impressive results. Some schools now serve breakfast in the classroom, and some high schools offer "grab and go" meals that students can pick up on their way to class. In the School District of Philadelphia, schools now offer free breakfast to all students, without families having to fill out paperwork.



real story:

Lowell Elementary School | Philadelphia County

Free breakfast has always been available for students at Philadelphia's Lowell Elementary School, where nearly 90 percent of children qualify for free or reduced-price meals. But it wasn't until four years ago that the school began serving breakfast in the classroom to ensure all students could start the day off right.

"When many students began their day, they were disengaged, hungry, unfocused—they were not reacting well to each other," said Dean of Students Diane Gillen. "Students can't focus if their stomach hurts because they're hungry or their head hurts. They're not learning, and they're not making positive choices."

The school, located in the Olney section of the city, recognized that it was difficult for many parents to drop off their children early enough for breakfast in the cafeteria. The school also didn't have enough staff to handle more children at that hour. "We decided to make breakfast a part of our day," Gillen said. "One of the reasons this program is successful is because we brought the service to our students rather than making them come to us."

A quick breakfast (usually milk, juice and some type of grain, like a fruit muffin or cereal) is available to students when they arrive in class. To minimize time taken from instruction, students eat while they listen to morning announcements and start work on an educational activity that can be performed while having breakfast.

Of the school's 976 students, an average of 860 now eat breakfast each day. Compare that to the less than 100 just a few years ago who would eat breakfast when it was served before school.

"Serving breakfast in the classroom does make an impact on instruction," Gillen said. "Students are no longer in class worrying about their stomach hurting or wondering when lunch is going to be. They can focus on academic success."

Officially Known As: Summer Food Service Program and Seamless Summer Option

How It Helps:

During the school year, **an average of 560,000 low-income students in Pennsylvania eat free or reduced-price lunch at school each day.** But when school is out and children aren't getting those meals, many of them face higher risks for hunger and malnutrition.

Summer meals help to fill that gap, **providing free meals to an average of nearly 120,000 children every day** in Pennsylvania in 2011.¹⁴ Kids and teens ages 18 and under can get these meals at hundreds of sites across the state, including schools, recreation centers, parks and community organizations. Many summer meals sites also offer educational or recreational activities, which allow kids to learn and stay physically active in a safe environment.

The Basics:

In 2011, there were nearly 2,000 sites serving free summer meals to kids. Summer meals are funded by the USDA, administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and run by public and nonprofit organizations. "Open" summer meals sites operate in low-income areas where at least half of the children qualify for free or reduced-price school meals. Any child can get a free meal at an open site—no registration or ID required. "Closed" sites provide free meals only to children who are enrolled in a summer program where at least half of participants qualify for free or reduced-price meals.



SUMMER MEALS

Providing food for low-income kids while school is out.

The Challenges:

Despite the need for summer meals, these programs are severely underused in Pennsylvania. **Just 22 percent of kids who receive free or reduced-price lunch during the school year receive free summer meals.** That means that in those months, hundreds of thousands of children are missing out on critical nutrition.

Two major barriers keep kids from getting summer meals:

- **Too few sites serve summer meals in their community.** In some rural counties with limited public transportation options, families live dozens of miles from their nearest summer meals site.
- **Families lack awareness about the program.** Often families don't know that their children can receive free meals at their neighborhood recreation center, park or church.



4 IN 5

of low-income students in Pennsylvania who miss out on summer meals



What's Next:

States across the country have developed new ways to reach more low-income children during the summer. Demonstration projects have included giving incentives to sites to expand their operating days, delivering meals to children's homes in rural areas, and providing backpacks of food for kids to take home over the weekend. In rural areas in Texas and Oregon, a demonstration project provided families of eligible low-income children with additional food assistance benefits on their electronic benefits cards, which they already use to buy food with SNAP and WIC benefits.

These projects have shown promise in reaching many more low-income children and reducing food insecurity during the summer. The USDA will release a final report on these projects this summer, which will help states like Pennsylvania determine what more they can do fight child hunger while school is out.



Officially Known As: The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

How It Helps:

The Child Care Food Program pays for nutritious meals and snacks for kids in daycare, afterschool programs and homeless shelters. It also serves elderly people in adult day care programs. Most participants are preschool-aged children, who are at a critical stage in their development and especially need the nutritional support this program provides. The Child Care Food Program makes daycare and afterschool programs more affordable for low-income parents and ensures that the food their kids eat is nutritious.

CHILD CARE FOOD PROGRAM

Nourishing kids in need.

real story:

Bonnie Caldwell, child-care provider
Curwensville, PA (Clearfield County)

Bonnie Caldwell travels all over Pennsylvania, encouraging child care providers to participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). She's Executive Director of the union for home-based child care providers, Child Care Providers United, but as a provider herself for more than 20 years, she knows firsthand how the program benefits low-income children when they're not at home or in school.

"I think it's a wonderful program—it reimburses child care providers for serving healthy and nutritious meals," said Bonnie, who cares for four children in her home in the rural town of Curwensville. "When I go to some child care homes, they're baking a turkey or making chili or spaghetti with fresh meat. They're home-cooked meals, instead of things like mac 'n' cheese in a box."

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) can be a huge help to working parents, who often work more than one job or late hours. Child care providers can get reimbursed for serving children up to two meals and one snack a day, at no cost to parents.

"A lot of working parents don't have time to cook a big meal, and if a parent works an odd shift, the provider can even feed them supper," Bonnie said. "The idea behind the Child and Adult Care Food Program is to feed these young children nutritious food, so when they get to school, they're prepared to learn and are more likely to succeed."

The Basics:

Eligible child care providers can enroll in the Child Care Food Program. Depending on the number of children they serve, meals and snacks may be delivered to their center or they may be reimbursed for food they serve to children in their care. The food must meet the nutritional guidelines set by the USDA. Reimbursement rates depend on the income levels of the families served, so a child care provider will receive a higher reimbursement for serving low-income children. Children up to age 12 or adults in day care are eligible to receive meals.

The Challenges:

In 1996, Congress changed the structure that determined reimbursement rates for some providers, which resulted in dramatic reductions in reimbursements for family day-care homes that served moderate-income children. As a result, participation in the Child Care Food Program has fallen among home providers. In Pennsylvania, 41 percent fewer family day-care homes participate in the program than did in 1996.¹⁵

What's Next:

Recent changes to the Child Care Food Program have reduced the paperwork burden for providers. In Pennsylvania, the state and local child advocacy organizations have explored ways to expand the Child Care Food Program to more providers who serve low-income children. Next year, Congress will have the chance to further reduce barriers to participation when it reauthorizes child nutrition programs as part of what is now known as the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act.



WIC

Giving babies a healthy start.

How It Helps:

One out of every two babies born in the United States will rely on WIC to give them a healthy start. The program serves low-income pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, infants and children up to age 5 who face nutritional risks. Families receive vouchers for healthy foods, nutrition education, health-care referrals and breastfeeding support.

WIC has demonstrated success as a preventative program, reducing rates of low birth weight, increasing rates of immunization, and helping reduce healthcare costs in the long run.

1 IN 2 INFANTS



in the U.S. will use WIC ¹⁶

The Basics:

Families apply for WIC at their county office. If approved, they can receive nutrition education, breastfeeding instruction, and counseling at WIC clinics, which helps them have healthier pregnancies and provide more nutritious diets for their children. To support healthy eating, participants receive vouchers that they can redeem at grocery stores for specific foods, including infant formula, cereal, milk, eggs, proteins, grains and produce. The USDA recently updated permitted foods to include more fruits and vegetables and whole grains

The Challenges:

WIC is not funded to serve all eligible families. Nationally, only 63 percent of eligible people participate. In Pennsylvania, that figure is even lower: **Just 56 percent of eligible Pennsylvanians receive WIC benefits.**¹⁷ Eligible women and infants are more likely to participate than eligible older children.

Unlike Social Security and Medicare, which guarantee benefits to every person who qualifies, WIC is not an entitlement program. Instead, Congress must appropriate funding each year for the program to continue. And at the current funding levels, WIC cannot expand to serve more eligible families.

Every \$1 dollar invested in WIC saves nearly \$3 in health care costs in the baby's first year of life.

What's Next:

WIC is likely to face funding cuts in the coming months as part of Washington's deficit-reduction measures. Because the program is already underfunded and unable to serve all who qualify, any cuts will make it more difficult for the program to reach families in need. In 2014, Congress will have an opportunity to strengthen WIC as members take up legislation that will set policies for federal child nutrition programs, including WIC.

HELPING PA FAMILIES & FARMERS

Mothers and children enrolled in the WIC program annually receive \$20 vouchers to spend on fruits and vegetables at Pennsylvania farmers' markets. It's part of the USDA's Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, which promotes healthy eating and benefits local farmers. In 2011, more than 155,000 WIC participants received vouchers. A similar program distributes vouchers to low-income seniors, benefiting nearly 97,000 elderly Pennsylvanians in 2011.

SNAP, formerly known as food stamps, can also be spent at more than 100 farmers markets in Pennsylvania. In 2012, those markets saw a 76 percent increase in SNAP use, with more than \$227,000 in SNAP benefits redeemed for local vegetables, fruits and other foods.



In Philadelphia, the "Philly Food Bucks" program run by The Food Trust gives SNAP participants an additional \$2 to buy local produce for every \$5 they spend in SNAP benefits. Another organization, the Fair Food Farmstand, allows SNAP participants to double how much they can buy with the benefits, under a program known as "Double Dollars."



FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAMS

Stocking food pantries in Pennsylvania.

Officially Known As: State Food Purchase Program, The Emergency Food Assistance Program, and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (senior boxes)

How It Helps:

When you think about the food that flows through food banks to families in need, you may assume most of that food was donated by community members at local food drives. In reality, many food banks and food pantries get the majority of their food from state and federal food distribution programs.

In 2011, the State Food Purchase Program supplied nearly 30 million pounds of food, which was distributed to low-income residents through food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters and faith-based organizations.

Many families and seniors seek help from food pantries and soup kitchens when their SNAP benefits run out during the month. Others turn to food pantries because they don't qualify for SNAP or other nutrition programs or don't know where else to find help.

The Basics:

In 2011, more than 1.3 million low-income Pennsylvania residents received food through the State Food Purchase Program. Nearly half a million of them were children.

TEFAP provides USDA commodities to food banks that serve low-income families and seniors in their communities. State Food is a state-funded program that supplements those commodities by granting funds to agencies across Pennsylvania, so they can buy food in bulk. That food is then distributed to hundreds of area food pantries, soup kitchens and other charitable food programs.

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program provides USDA commodities specifically to meet the nutritional needs of low-income seniors. **Each month, about 35,000 seniors in Pennsylvania get boxes filled with canned fruits and vegetables, cheese, cereal, meat and other high-protein foods.**



real story:

Dale Breyfogle, executive director
Northern Lehigh Food Bank
Slatington, PA (Lehigh County)

When Dale Breyfogle started volunteering at the Northern Lehigh Food Bank in 1991, the agency served 80 families a month. Today, Dale is the executive director—and only paid staffer—of the food bank, which now feeds more than 300 families each month.

Much of that increase took place in recent years, after the recession began. “People just can’t make ends meet anymore,” Dale said. “Some of our clients work three part-time jobs and still don’t have enough money to buy food. We also see more senior citizens. In the past, they were so proud and didn’t want to admit they needed the help.”

Located in Slatington, about 15 miles northwest of Allentown, the food bank has “been very blessed” with donations from churches, businesses, schools and community members, Dale said.



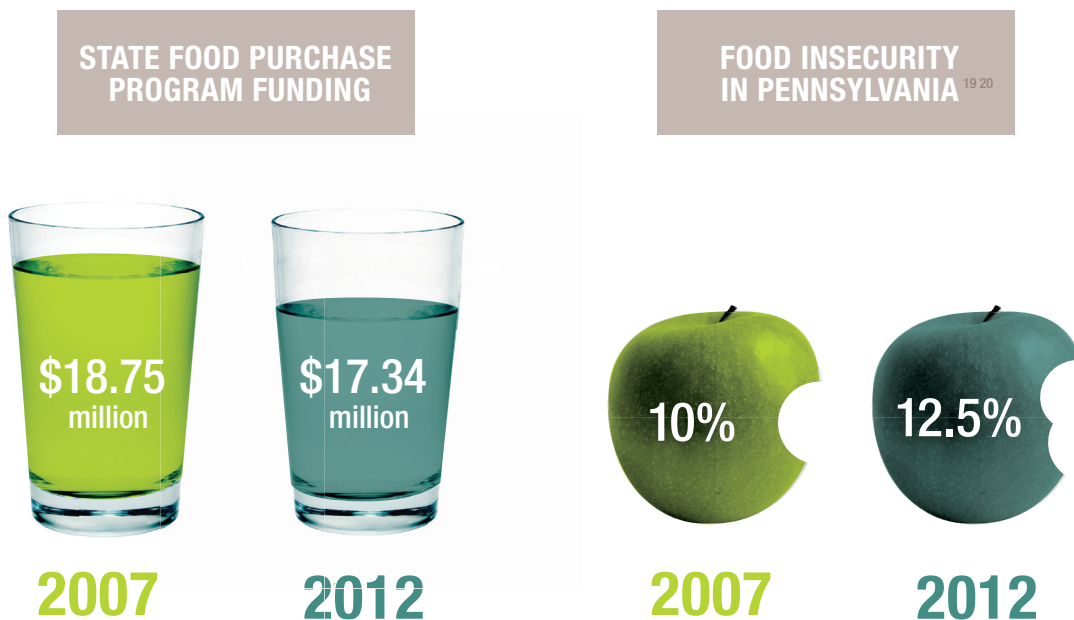
Still, the food bank relies on two government programs—the State Food Purchase Program and The Emergency Food Assistance Program—for one-quarter of the food it distributes to clients.

Dale’s biggest challenge? “The unknown,” she said. “Not knowing whether state funds are going to be cut, how many volunteers we’re going to have, and how many people are going to come on a given day. There are so many who need help. I just want to make sure that we serve everyone and meet their needs.”

What’s Next:

Funding for the State Food Purchase Program has not kept up with demand at local food pantries. Since the recession began in 2007, Pennsylvania lawmakers have slashed the State Food budget by nearly \$1.5 million, from \$18.75 million in FY 2007 to \$17.3 million in FY 2012. These cuts dramatically reduced the amount of food available to people in need, as food and fuel prices continue to climb.

TEFAP and the senior box program also struggle to meet the need in our state. Later this year, Congress will have the chance to improve these programs when it takes up the Farm Bill, a major piece of federal legislation that authorizes various food, nutrition and agricultural programs.



WE CAN ALL FIGHT HUNGER.



Even as Pennsylvania begins to recover from the recession, hunger still affects more than 1.6 million people in every community across the state. Many families are still out of work, and now more than ever, a record-number of Americans are working for wages that don't even cover their basic needs.

Our economy will recover, and more Pennsylvanians will regain the means to feed their families without assistance, but it will take time. And there are many residents in our state who will always struggle to earn enough money to afford the food that they need. This includes the growing number of seniors finding it hard to live on fixed incomes and people with disabilities who have limited opportunities for employment.

Pennsylvania must ensure that all residents have the food they need to lead healthy, active lives. It's not just a moral issue; it's an economic one. Because hunger affects the health of our residents as well as their ability to perform in school or at work, we can't afford to allow anyone to fall through the cracks.

Hunger demands action from each of us—lawmakers, businesses, schools, religious congregations, community organizations and concerned citizens.

Charities do the best they can to feed the hungry, but they can't do it alone. In fact, **charitable contributions provide only 4 percent of all food assistance in the United States.** Federal nutrition programs, like SNAP and free school meals, provide the rest.

To more effectively fight hunger in Pennsylvania, we need to raise awareness about nutrition programs that help those in need and remove the barriers that keep families from accessing them. At the same time, public officials must enact policies that strengthen, rather than weaken, these vital programs.

Many lawmakers sound the alarm about fraud and abuse in the nutrition programs, but the fact is, Pennsylvania faces a much bigger problem: **Hundreds of thousands of eligible residents who qualify for these nutrition programs are missing out on their benefits.**

We need to identify barriers—large and small—that keep eligible people from getting food assistance. Tight bus schedules prevent kids from getting breakfast in the cafeteria before the opening bell. Phone lines are constantly busy at the welfare offices. A lack of transportation in rural areas makes it impossible for children to get to summer meals sites.

Public, private and nonprofit agencies can work together to address these challenges and connect eligible people to programs that can help them put healthy food on the table.

Volunteers can support local anti-hunger agencies that are already working to increase participation in nutrition programs. Individuals and groups can make a big impact by helping low-income children get school breakfast, promoting free summer

TAKE ACTION ONLINE: visit www.hungerreportpa.com

- **Use our online tools to contact your elected officials.** Tell them why reducing hunger should be a priority for Pennsylvania and the United States.

- **Learn how to more effectively volunteer your time to fight hunger.** From increasing awareness about SNAP to promoting summer meals for kids, there's much more you can do than hold a food drive.

HERE'S HOW:

meals for kids in their community, and raising awareness about SNAP. These programs provide a continual source of nutritious food for low-income families, allowing them to afford other necessities, like rent, utilities and doctors' visits.

Policymakers must work to protect these programs and improve access for all who qualify. SNAP has long proven itself the nation's most effective and efficiently run anti-hunger program, serving as a lifeline for nearly 1 in 7 Pennsylvania residents. **Lawmakers must preserve the program's fundamental structure and eligibility rules** to ensure that it can continue reaching those who truly need help. For WIC, which only reaches a fraction of the women, infants and children who qualify, members of Congress should increase funding so that more low-income kids get a healthy start in life. And with families continuing to seek help from local food pantries and soup kitchens in Pennsylvania, **our state legislators and governor should restore funding to the State Food Purchase Program**, which gets less funding today than it did before the recession began.

In a state as agriculturally rich as Pennsylvania and a nation as wealthy as the United States, there's no doubt that we have the resources to end hunger. But we need to build the political will to do so.

Everyday citizens can play a big part in making this happen. Many people think their voices don't count, but advocating on policy issues is one of the most effective ways that individuals can fight hunger. Taking part in an effort to improve policy can create real, positive change in the lives of families who struggle with hunger in our state.

Contact your elected officials today at www.hungerreport-pa.com. Use our online tools to tell them why you think reducing hunger should be a priority.

You've already taken the first step in fighting hunger by learning more about the resources we have to help families put food on the table. But it really should just be that: The first step.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

To more effectively fight hunger in Pennsylvania, we need to:

1. RAISE AWARENESS

about vital, but underutilized, nutrition programs like SNAP (food stamps), WIC (Women, Infants and Children) and free school meals.

2. REMOVE BARRIERS

that keep families from accessing these programs, from transportation issues to insufficient staffing at local welfare offices.

3. ADVOCATE FOR POLICIES

that strengthen the effectiveness of nutrition programs, most importantly by increasing funding to meet existing need and protecting the eligibility rules of these programs.

4. SUPPORT LEGISLATION

that strengthens working families' ability to meet their basic needs, by investing in education and training programs and ensuring that the wages they earn are enough to cover the essentials, including nutritious food.



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About the Coalition Against Hunger:



Founded in 1996, the Coalition Against Hunger strives to build a community where all people have the food they need to lead healthy lives. The Coalition connects people with food assistance programs and nutrition education; provides resources to a network of food pantries; and educates the public and policymakers about responsible solutions that prevent people from going hungry.

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