MAYORS WELLNESS CAMPAIGN®

The Mayors Wellness Campaign offers free, or low-cost, tools and strategies like this one to make your community a healthier place to live, work, and play. We encourage you to look through all of the MWC Tool categories.

Physical Health and Nutrition
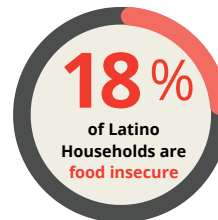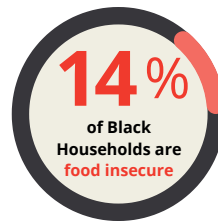## Food Security

? What Is Food Security?

Food security is when every person in a household has consistent access to enough food to live an active, healthy life.

What does food security look like in NJ?

1 in 12
residents are
food insecure

1 in 10
children are
food insecure

Disparities **in food security by race & ethnicity**

14%
of Black
Households are
food insecure

18%
of Latino
Households are
food insecure

5%
of White
Households are
food insecure

Food insecurity is higher among: low income communities; Black and Hispanic households; households with children; and single parent homes.

While risk factors for food insecurity include limited access to full-service supermarkets, public transportation and lack of affordable housing, a majority of people report not being able to afford food.

? What Are the Harms of Food Insecurity?

In children, food insecurity has been shown to increase the risk of **anemia**, **asthma**, **cognitive problems**, and **anxiety**. It is also associated with higher risks of hospitalizations and poorer general health.

Among adults, food insecurity is associated with increased **mental health illnesses**, **diabetes**, **high blood pressure**, and **poor or fair health**.

⏱ Take Action:

Here are steps you can take to improve food security in your community:

- **Identify Your Community's Nutrition Needs**
  - It is typically not necessary for you to complete your own community food needs assessment. Reach out to the many local organizations or state agencies that regularly collect this information as part of a community health needs assessment (CHNA), such as:
    - Foodbanks
    - Hospital Systems, Health Collaboratives and Region Health Hub CHNAs
    - NJ Department of Children and Families county-specific needs assessment
    - Local Public Health Officers
  - If a nutrition needs assessment has not been performed, consider collaborating with others to create one. The goal is to identify what your needs are and the reason why residents don't have enough food. Ask: can residents get to the grocery store, are there healthy options available, or do residents have enough money to buy food? Knowing this will help you set your goals.

- **Identify Already Existing Initiatives and Resources In Your Community**
  - Many towns already have existing or nearby initiatives focused on improving access to healthy foods. Consider how you can increase awareness of these programs. Your goal is to help connect and enroll residents in them. Here are some ideas to help you get started:

- Reach out to community leaders and organizations to identify food security resources already available. Be sure to check Facebook and the internet.
- Ask how these programs are promoted to residents to strategize new approaches.
- Connect with your local health system to learn more about their efforts to improve social determinants of health and food security initiatives. Help connect the work they are doing with other efforts in your community so everyone is aware of all available resources and can work together to reach residents.
- There are many statewide and local resources available for residents, such as the NJ Supplemental Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), NJ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), School Nutrition Programs, and Nutrition Programs for Senior Citizens. See below for additional resources for residents and municipalities.

- **Create a food security program that fits your community if none exist or there are unmet nutrition needs you want to address.**
  - Start at step 1 to better understand your community's nutrition needs. Design a program that addresses the specific barriers faced by your residents. Collaborate with community partners, health care providers, and health systems to plan your new initiative and reach residents. Use a planning toolkit to get started.

Evidence-Based Strategies

Need some program inspiration? Here are examples of initiatives that have been shown to have a positive impact.
- Create a weekly farmer's market or mobile farmer's market and allow residents to use Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT).
- Subsidize grocers to offer discounts on healthy food options.
- Offer low-income households matching funds to purchase healthy foods (i.e., produce coupons).
- Incentivize grocery stores to create point-of-purchase prompts for healthy foods.
- Create partnerships between local farms and grocery stores to supply healthy, locally grown food.

FOLLOW THEIR LEAD

Montclair's MWC is part of the Montclair Community Farm Coalition, which includes several community partners dedicated to tackling local food security.

Their Mobile Food Stands reach residents where they are, focusing particularly on those in senior housing and others in need of food access by subsidizing produce prices and accepting the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

The Mobile Food Stand, which has 7 sites in Montclair and surrounding towns, served over 470 individuals, grew over 4,000 pounds of organic produce, and increased SNAP transactions while also engaging over 1,000 volunteers.

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- Increase residents' awareness of NJ SNAP and encourage elected officials to introduce legislation increasing SNAP benefits.
- Camden School Districts implemented a farm-to-school pilot program with the help of Campbell's Full Futures program and The Common Market, which serves to increase youth consumption of fresh, local foods while boosting local farmers economically.
- Create a community fridge program like those found in Maplewood and Jersey City in collaboration with community partner to implement an easily accessible option to address food insecurity.

More Resources

Tools and Data:

- Assessing Community Needs and Resources toolkit
- County Community Health Assessments (CHAs), Community Health Needs Assessments (CHNAs), and Community Health Improvement Plans (CHIPs)
- County Health Profiles
- Feeding America: Nutrition Assessment and Evaluation Resources
- Food Research and Action Center: Hunger and Its Solutions in NJ: Landscape Analysis of Current Initiatives, Recommended Action and Emerging Opportunities for Further Investment 2022
- Municipal Food Systems Planning Toolkit
- Real College Survey assessing basic needs security among college students
- Screen and Intervene: A Toolkit for Pediatricians to Address Food Insecurity
- UniteUs
- U.S. Department of Agriculture: Overview of Food Security in the U.S.

Programs for Residents:

- College Hunger
- Division of Aging Services
- FindHelp
- NJ 211 Don't Go Hungry
- NJ Commodity Supplemental Food Program for Seniors
- NJ Food Pantry Locations
- NJHelps Screener and Application for SNAP, WFNJ/TANF, NJ Familycare/Medicaid

- [NJ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)](#)
- [NJ SNAP-Ed](#)
- [NJ Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)](#)
- [Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Program](#)
- [Senior Meal Sites](#)
- [Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) summer meal site locations](#)
- [WorkFirst NJ/Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (WFNJ/TANF)](#)

Programs for Municipalities & Partners
- [Bring SNAP-Ed Classes to your town, food pantry, school, or community-based agency](#)
- [Food Corps](#)
- [Fostering Strong Partnerships to Expand Access to Meals](#)
- [Getting Started: Farm to preschool program roadmap](#)
- [How to Become an Approved WIC Farmer](#)
- [Hunger Free New Jersey](#)
- [Mayors Alliance to End Childhood Hunger](#)
- [No Kids Hungry](#)
- [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation County Health Rankings and Roadmaps: Take Actions to Improve Health](#)
- [Rutgers Against Hunger Resources](#)
- [Serving Summer Meals at Health Care Institutions Implementation Guide](#)
- [SNAP Outreach & Advocacy Tools](#)
- [UniteUs and FindHelp](#)
- [WIC Farmers' Markets Nutrition Programs](#)

Let Us Help

MWC staff is here to help you get your program up and running. We can help you:

- Create an evidence-based program that fits the needs of your community.
- Develop your volunteer training.
- Create tools to measure the impact of your intervention.

For more information about the [Mayors Wellness Campaign](#) or assistance with your Food Security Program, contact the MWC Program Officer at info@njhcqi.org or 609-452-5980.