



THE STATE OF HUNGER IN MINNESOTA

— 2015 —



Our work

ENSURING FOOD SECURITY FOR ALL MINNESOTANS

Hunger Solutions Minnesota works to end hunger by advancing fair nutrition policy and guiding grassroots advocacy on behalf of hungry Minnesotans and the diverse groups that serve them. We connect Minnesota's food shelves and hunger-relief organizations with the necessary funding, technical assistance and logistical support to reach thousands of Minnesota individuals, families and children in need. Our work is made possible through the generous support of donors across the country; each sharing our commitment to ensuring no Minnesotan will struggle with food insecurity alone.

How it all works

SMALL ORGANIZATION, BIG IMPACT



Dear Friends,

I am alarmed that the rate of hunger for Minnesotans is still elevated. In a recent FRAC/ Gallup Healthways survey, 11% of Minnesotans reported having a food hardship, or not having enough money to buy food in the last year. Clearly, thousands of low-income Minnesotans have not enjoyed the benefits of our state's economic improvements.

Jobs and other data indicate a new normal in Minnesota. This is bringing unprecedented demand to the statewide network of 300 food shelves.

In the post-great recession economy, many of the families that visit food shelves have jobs. These jobs don't pay enough to cover expenses. In fact, according to a survey from The Wall Street Journal, 58% of all of Minnesota's \$1.1 billion in public assistance funding goes to working families.

When over a half-million Minnesotans are still struggling to afford the food they need to stay healthy and productive, we need to keep the pressure on our state and federal officials to support effective policies to bring people out of poverty. Charity alone will never be able to address the current hunger needs, let alone expand if nutrition programs get cut further.

With your help, our Food HelpLine addresses food needs today. With your advocacy, we work together to ensure greater food access in the future. I invite you to read through this report to learn more about all of our innovative responses to hunger relief.

You inspire us to win the Minnesota food fight!

— Colleen Moriarty, Executive Director



9,000
daily visits to food shelves.

9,000 a day and rising

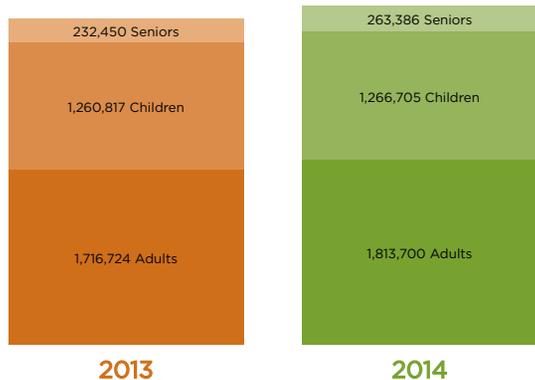
In 2014, there were 3.34 million visits to 300 food shelves across the state. That is 9,000 people a day seeking food assistance. This represents a 4% increase over 2013.

WHO VISITS FOOD SHELVES?

- 38% — Children
- 54% — Adults
- 8% — Seniors

In 2014, there were 263,386 food shelf visits by seniors. While senior visits represent the lowest percentage of food shelf service, seniors' needs for food assistance continues to rise, up 13% from 2013. This indicates more hungry seniors are seeking help and our concerted outreach efforts have been effective. Hunger Solutions Minnesota and our network of food shelves have been focusing on reaching this population for the last several years.

Food shelves report increased child visits in the summer. When school is out of session and low-income families cannot rely on free school meals, they turn to local food shelves to obtain the food to replace those meals. This summer meal gap is increasing too. Last summer, there were 313,000 summer child visits — an increase of an additional 10% compared to the school year.



Mobile hunger relief

This year the emerging trend of free mobile food delivery for the poor took a huge leap. Over 50,000 people received more than 1 million pounds of food at or near their home. We advocated for and won a bipartisan effort at the Minnesota Legislature to provide \$1 million annually in seed money to expand the program even farther! Our new program will provide grants to food shelves located where low income seniors and others have the greatest barriers to food access.

Folks like Beth, a 66 year old from St. Cloud. Beth calls her mobile food delivery from the Catholic Charities food shelf a life saver. Beth is going through cancer treatment and is very frail. Food is critical to her recovery, but she is homebound. “The only way for me to get food now is my weekly delivery from the mobile food shelf”.



Volunteers with The Open Door Mobile Pantry in Eagan.

Hunger help on call

The Minnesota Food HelpLine is a resource for individuals and families seeking information on how to obtain food. The helpline staff connects callers with emergency food providers in their community, government assistance, nutritional assistance programs, and various work support services that promote self-sufficiency.

In 2014 there were 5,025 total calls.

- 81% of callers were income eligible for SNAP and other nutrition programs.
- The average income of our callers is \$18,500/year.
- 15% were unemployed.

POLICY SHIFT, DECREASED ACCESS

Last fall, we worked with the Minnesota Department of Human Services to assist people who had lost their SNAP benefits. Last year, Minnesota lost the federal waiver to enroll able bodied adults without dependents between ages 18-50 in SNAP for longer than three months. Because of dramatic shifts in nutrition policy, SNAP (formerly known as food stamps) benefits decreased and thousands lost their eligibility. When this waiver expired, 89,000 individuals completely lost their SNAP benefits, more than twice as many as forecasted. HSM's executive director, Colleen Moriarty, co-chairs a task force formed by DHS Commissioner, Lucinda Jesson, that is developing policies and practices to better serve this vulnerable population.

"With SNAP, I don't have to worry about where the money for groceries is coming from. I can focus on getting better and finding a new job."

— David is currently unemployed because an accident last fall left him temporarily disabled and lives in St. Paul.



1.888.711.1151 | www.MNFoodHelpLine.org

over the phone language interpreters available

SNAP Rx

SNAP Rx works in partnership with clinics to reach hungry Minnesotans, especially low-income seniors. Hunger has serious health consequences for seniors. In a 2014 report, the National Foundation to End Senior Hunger made a direct link between senior hunger and declining health. Even when controlling for other factors such as income, seniors with inadequate nutrition were:



- 60% more likely to experience depression.
- 53% more likely to report a heart attack.
- 40% more likely to develop congestive heart failure.

Senior health and hunger intersect in critical ways, and health care providers can reduce the stigma of hunger by treating it as a health issue. Dietitians can be crucial links to help seniors address hunger as part of their overall health.

“Before SNAP Rx, we didn’t have a proper system for screening for food insecurity, and had few resources to treat it. Now we’re screening, referring, and watching our patients get the help they need. With just a few minutes of our time, we’re able to provide a significant improvement in the patient’s ability to meet their nutritional needs each day. It’s one of the best things we’ve started in our clinic this year!”

— Katelyn Engel RD, LD DaVita Dietitian

Our SNAP Rx website (www.snaprx.org) gives providers information about the project and links to order free outreach materials. We will soon launch a webinar hosted by the U of M Medical School, where doctors can learn about the “Eat Well to Be Well” concept and how SNAP can help their patients. Doctors are being trained to ask questions like: “In the last month, have you had to skip or reduce the size of meals because of a lack of money?” If the answer is yes, patients are given a “prescription” to call our HelpLine, and in some cases, they can have the HelpLine call them directly to provide assistance.



SNAP Rx connects with clinics via on site presentations and continuing education opportunities.

Farmers markets fighting hunger

Last year we took on several new projects with farmers markets as another way to fight hunger. Farmers markets are great partners because markets are in communities throughout the state. Families and children from low-income communities and communities of color are less likely to have diets that meet nutrition guidelines. Studies show that residents of rural areas, low-income neighborhoods, and communities of color have less access to supermarkets and the fresh produce they sell. Farmers markets help fill these gaps in the summer.

- In Minneapolis, we partnered with The Food Group to rescue 71,000 pounds of produce from the Minneapolis Farmers Markets each weekend. The food was then redistributed to local food shelves at no charge.
- HSM partnered with the Department of Human Services to provide grants and technical support to smaller markets to encourage participation in the Market Bucks program which provides incentives to low income customers using their SNAP benefits.



Healthy eating here at home

The anti-hunger legislative coalition of Hunger Solutions, Legal Aid and Mazon worked for two years to successfully bring about policy that would institutionalize a “Market Bucks” program for SNAP recipients. This year the legislature passed a bill that will support farmers market incentives for SNAP enrollees. This legislation provides on-going support of \$325,000 annually to encourage healthy eating and expand low income Minnesotans buying power at farmers markets with \$10 vouchers that can be redeemed weekly.

Last summer, HSM partnered with Children’s Defense Fund Minnesota to reach even more low income families with farmers market incentives. We created a five-week nutrition pilot for student families at Academia Cesar Chavez Freedom School. The goal was to increase family’s intake of fresh produce with nutrition education and \$20 a week for market produce. Over 85% of the school’s families participated and they all reported a positive impact on their diets.

“It was a great help and very easy to use. It helps us eat fresher veggies and to try different types of food.”

— Freedom School parent

Hunger day on the hill



Over 100 Voice of Hunger advocates came together in February to rally support for our legislative agenda and to meet with their elected officials. We hosted a morning of inspiring speakers like the “Sioux Chef” Sean Sherman, national child hunger advocate Chef Seth Bixby Daugherty, and former food shelf visitor, Isaac Russell who is now a successful legislative assistant to Senator James Metzen.



Students from Concordia University in St. Paul

Advocacy matters

HSM leads a statewide coalition called Minnesota Partners to End Hunger. We promote fair and robust policies to assure all families will be able to put food on their tables. Each year, we convene a core group of advocates to work on a collaborative agenda to support hunger relief programs. One of our highest priorities is to expand universal free school breakfast to 83,000 students in grades Pre-K through third grade. Students who regularly eat breakfast perform better academically, have better attendance records, make fewer trips to the nurse, and are at lower risk for obesity. Messages of support from our network and others have made an impact. The Minnesota Legislature and Governor Dayton are supportive and have made proposals to fund this expansion.

A SPECIAL TRIP TO WASHINGTON DC

To bring additional voices of hunger to our federal delegation, we offered a scholarship to a hunger policy conference in Washington DC. Mai Yia Vang the SNAP Outreach Specialist at Neighborhood House in St. Paul made the trip with our staff.

“It was empowering to have participant stories to share. Their stories are what make me passionate about my work and sharing hunger issues at Capitol Hill, with those in power; I know I made a difference.”

— Mai Yia Vang, Neighborhood House

Food assistance by the truckload

Food shelves and their visitors across the state have come to rely upon the high quality food we are able to provide from The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). Last year Minnesota acquired 10.7 million pounds valued at \$7.3 million from this USDA program. We received and distributed 61 different products such as:

HEALTHY VARIETY

PRODUCT	VALUE
Orange Juice	\$ 481,000
Chicken	\$ 656,000
Peanut Butter	\$ 198,000
Spaghetti Sauce	\$ 251,000
Blueberries	\$ 214,000

TEFAP is the backbone of the emergency food system because the products include items not often donated to food shelves. Some goods are too costly to purchase at retail value, so their availability through TEFAP allows food shelves to obtain higher-quality foods at little or no cost.



Better data, better service

We are proud to announce a new and free offering to food shelves — a client in-take and tracking database. This has consistently risen to the top as a request from food shelves throughout the state. This service provides value to our members that run small, mostly volunteer food shelves. We developed and beta-tested this system with 5 food shelf partners to design a simple to use tool. With this free tool, our members will be better positioned to report accurate data to help them with fund raising. And, because the tool is free, food shelves are able to direct their limited resources to purchasing much needed food for their clients.



Food shelf capacity building

Hunger Solutions works to ensure that our network of food shelves has access to over \$3 million annually in state funded emergency, equipment and operating grants to better serve their community. We also administer the annual summer food shelf challenge which leverages a \$150,000 grant from Open Your Heart to the Hungry and Homeless into \$1.4 million in local funds raised by 200 food shelves.

“Our biggest success story involved a newspaper article that I asked be printed regarding the need at the food shelf. The first day the article appeared in the paper, this wonderful, kind lady came in, asked for me & handed a check which at first glance appeared to be \$500. To my surprise, it was \$5,000. I started to cry & so did she! What a teary eyed bunch we are in Brainerd.”

— Linda Loftis, Brainerd Salvation Army



Food access summit

We are proud to help lead this annual conference for over 500 cross- sector food advocates and businesses. The Summit’s goals are to educate, organize, and mobilize participants to support local, state, and national efforts to improve our food system for low-income individuals and families. When surveyed, 76% of past attendees reported improved work to increase access to healthy foods for underserved Minnesotans as a result of what they learned at the Food Access Summit. The Summit has made an impact on the business model for Kwik Trip stores.

“Kwik Trip has continued to work with legislators to be able to provide WIC foods, and we have made a commitment to build new stores in areas with no grocery store.”

— Jennifer Wood, Kwik Trip Dietitian and summit attendee



HUNGER SOLUTIONS MINNESOTA

Winning Minnesota's Food Fight

www.HungerSolutions.org | 651.486.9860



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We're ranked as the most efficient civic nonprofit
by Minneapolis St. Paul Business Journal, 2 years running.