

# Food insecurity: An unnecessary truth

Food insecurity is the inability to access enough affordable, healthy food.



## HOW COMMON IS FOOD INSECURITY IN OUR COMMUNITY?



**12.5% of individuals** in Chittenden County are food insecure. That means **19,600** of our neighbors struggle to afford the food they need to be healthy.<sup>1</sup>

## with costly negative impacts



### PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH:

malnutrition, obesity, overweight, anxiety, stress



### ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT:

inability to focus, impaired development



### WORKFORCE & JOB READINESS:

poor performance, low productivity, absenteeism

## WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE FOOD INSECURE?

“I always skip meals. It’s been a long time since I’ve had three meals a day because I want to make sure my son eats”

“At the end of the month, you have to use what you have. If you have to give them mac and cheese or Ramen noodles for the next three days then that’s what has to be done.”

“I found that if I drink a two-liter of soda each day I won’t be hungry. I’ve gained forty pounds in the past three months – but it fights the hunger, and my son gets to eat real food.”

“We need to go grocery shopping usually once a week but most of the time it’s once a month. Between childcare and house payments, insurance, there’s not enough money.”

<sup>1</sup> Feeding America, *Map the Meal Gap*, [feedingamerica.org](http://feedingamerica.org)

# Let's reset the table of the anti-hunger movement.

The Hunger Council of Chittenden County is a partnership of community leaders developing strategies to achieve food security for all people Chittenden County. By uniting diverse voices and perspectives for collective action we can rebuild our food system from the bottom up.

Prevention is not about providing food assistance – it's about addressing the root causes of the issue and creating a community that offers:

- + ACCESS TO FOOD**
- + AFFORDABLE OPTIONS**
- + SAFETY NETS**

As a community we can continue to temporarily quell the pain of hunger by distributing meals and stocking food shelves, but if we work together we can prevent expensive health, social and economic problems by improving access to affordable, healthy food. Together, we will catalyze action through innovation and systems change:

## SHARE

Each of us has something different to contribute to the solution whether it's resources, expertise, influence or ideas.

## LEARN

We must educate ourselves and others about how food insecurity affects our community and barriers we must overcome to solve it.

## ACT

With coordinated effort, we can advocate, take action and be efficient in our response.



## We all have a role in creating a solution.

Based on findings from a 2014 survey, we are engaging members from all sectors of the broad community to participate in discussions about the strategies for fighting food insecurity that participants ranked most compelling and willing to engage in:

- 1 Exploring how to use existing spaces and places as hubs for increased access to affordable food
- 2 Educating colleagues and friends about how to recognize food insecurity and how to intervene
- 3 Raising awareness of current food assistance programs and resources

## Join the conversation.

Learn more about food insecurity and help us deconstruct this complex issue. Attend a Hunger Council meeting and encourage others you know get involved. Collaboration is the key to success.

Connect with Jenna Banning at Hunger Free Vermont ([jbanning@hungerfreevt.org](mailto:jbanning@hungerfreevt.org)) for information about upcoming meetings:

- » September 14, 2015
- » November 16, 2015
- » February 8, 2016
- » May 9, 2016

All meetings are held at the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission office: 110 W Canal Street #202 in Winooski

# Opportunities for change

The whole community can help create an environment of food security:

## In WORKPLACES

- 1 De-stigmatize enrollment by sharing information about nutrition programs during employee orientation or trainings and post on bulletin boards in employee break rooms.
- 2 Use employee/team meals or snacks to provide needed nutrition – it could be their first or only meal that day.

## In CHILD CARE

- 1 Ask your child care provider to enroll in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), which provide meal subsidies for children.
- 2 Look for opportunities and funding to build healthy meals into programs. Engage young children in lessons about gardening, choosing healthy foods, and preparing meals or snacks.

## In EDUCATION

- 1 Raise awareness of food assistance programs – not just school breakfast and lunch – and disseminate information in regular communications with families. Visit [schoolmealsvt.com](http://schoolmealsvt.com) for more ideas.
- 2 Provide healthy food options in vending machines and cafeterias and start a school garden.

## In GOVERNMENT

- 1 Implement healthy community design strategies that support an individual's access to affordable fresh foods through local food production, use of public spaces for farmers' markets, and adoption of zoning ordinances that encourage a higher density, mixed-use development pattern in conjunction with sidewalks and bike lanes.
- 2 Raise awareness of food assistance programs through town bulletin boards, in newsletters, and at town-sponsored events like farmers' markets or town meetings.

## In FAITH COMMUNITIES

- 1 When visiting members of your community in the hospital or during recovery from an illness, help connect them with food resources in their communities such as meals on wheels, congregate meals, 3SquaresVT, and the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.
- 2 Encourage your place of worship to be used as a summer feeding site for children.

## In HEALTH CARE

- 1 Screen families for food insecurity and refer them to appropriate food assistance programs or to 2-1-1. Encourage all staff and practitioners to complete Hunger Free Vermont's one-hour online course.
- 2 Look for opportunities and funding to build healthy meals into programs when working with low-income or at-risk groups.

# Food insecurity exists in every town in Vermont.

Ending hunger in Vermont requires all our communities to take action. Hunger Councils have been established throughout the state to educate and empower local communities to end hunger. Councils convene community leaders across all sectors to end hunger and foster powerful connections that alleviate food insecurity systematically and sustainably. For information about Hunger Councils in Vermont, connect with Jenna Banning ([jbanning@hungerfreevt.org](mailto:jbanning@hungerfreevt.org)).

*The Hunger Council of Chittenden County messaging subcommittee includes representatives from:*



## What contributes to, or perpetuates food insecurity?

- » Cost
- » Availability
- » Affordability
- » Lack of transportation
- » Food literacy (knowing how to select, cook and prepare nutritious food)
- » Disabilities/special circumstances

## Community Assessment Checklist: What does your community offer?

- Stores that sell affordable, healthy options
- Community garden access
- Food and nutrition programs as part of the municipal plan or planning process
- Transportation services for people with disabilities or those who need assistance
- Free and reduced meals at public schools
- Child care centers offering meal programs
- Summer meal programs for kids
- Community meals
- Church dinners
- Senior centers that offer meals
- A community food shelf or pantry

## Evaluate the effectiveness of current programs, services and efforts:

- Do programs, products or services exist?
- Do people know they're available?
- Can people get there during service hours?
- Can people afford/access the food being offered?
- How can we improve this program, product or service?

**Do you or someone you know need help?  
Call 2-1-1 for assistance.**