

Food insecurity could be a struggle for any employee making less than \$15.81 per hour.

It's an unnecessary truth: 12.5% of individuals in Chittenden County suffer from food insecurity.



That's 1 in 8.

As an employer, there are simple ways you can help your employees and their families have opportunities to access proper nutrition.

Food insecurity is different than hunger – it's the inability to access enough affordable, healthy food. It can have costly negative impacts on an employee's physical and mental health, professional achievement and readiness to work. For employers, this means a workforce at risk of poor performance, absenteeism or low productivity.

Food insecurity is a result of many factors *in addition to income*, including high cost of housing and transportation, health needs and disabilities and unforeseen hardships. Employers can make a difference by taking simple steps and considerations:

- 1 De-stigmatize enrollment in supplemental food assistance programs by sharing information during employee orientation or trainings and posting on bulletin boards in employee break rooms and common areas.
- 2 Allow flexibility in shifts to allow employees to access support systems like supplemental food assistance programs, food shelves and CSA pick-up times. Many only allow access to benefits during typical work hours.
- 3 Consider offering benefits or worksite wellness programs that are relevant to your employees' needs. A CSA, farmers market credits, weekly employee meals or cash-like benefits for food purchases may make a significant impact.
- 4 Offer accessibility to emergency funds through the Income Advance Loan program (see reverse for details).
- 5 Participate in *Working Bridges*, which can offer access to services like economic education and a shared on-site resource coordinator (see reverse for details).
- 6 Offer healthy options in vending machines and use employee or team meals and snacks to provide needed nutrition – it could be their first or only meal that day.

Community starts here.

Let's work together to reverse this challenge. Connect with Katy Davis at Hunger Free Vermont for more ways to get involved: katy@hungerfreevt.org.

Resources

Income Advance Loan

Employee loans are a hand up, not a handout. This employee loan/savings program the result of a partnership between employers and financial institutions to help employees meet emergency needs, and begin saving and building credit. It provides a responsible lending alternative to help employees meet emergency needs, but also allows them to begin saving and build credit. This benefit provides employers with structure and education to aid in their employees' financial stability and turn a cash crisis into a savings plan. For more information contact Lisa Falcone: lisa@unitedwaycc.org

Working Bridges

United Way leads the Working Bridges Employer Collaborative. The concept is simple: the network of employers work together to effectively develop and test innovative HR practices using the workplace as a platform for services designed to help workers minimize work disruptions, decrease absenteeism, improve financial stability and ultimately increase retention and advancement. Learn more by visiting unitedwaycc.org/Working-Bridges.

Worksite Wellness

A wellness program can include solutions to address the risk of food insecurity. Here in Vermont, more and more work sites are instituting these programs. Worksite wellness programs benefit the entire organization. In addition to helping improve the health of employees, successful worksites reap the benefits of lower health care costs, greater productivity, reduced absenteeism, stronger employee morale and retention, and larger hiring pools. To find more information and a step-by-step guide to creating a wellness program, visit healthvermont.gov and search for worksite wellness.

The Chittenden County Hunger Council messaging subcommittee includes representatives from:



**United Way of
Chittenden County**