NEW JERSEY

HUNGER PREVENTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**2012-2015**

**Report to the Governor and Legislature**

Submitted by:

**Hunger Prevention Advisory Committee**

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Background on Legislation 3

Executive Summary 4

Quick Facts about Hunger 6

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) 7

Amount of Emergency Food Distributed 8

Legislature Support Needed 9

HPAC Goals 10

HPAC Membership 11

HPAC Expenditures 12

The Hunger Prevention Advisory Committee (HPAC) would like to thank everyone involved in hunger relief efforts in New Jersey for their hard work and dedication to residents in need. Given the national recession and the economic recovery, according to the 2014 New Jersey Kids Count report, roughly one-third of New Jersey children live in families earning too little to meet their basic needs. Whether you donated food or money, volunteered your time in a food bank, pantry, or soup kitchen or processed Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, among other activities, your efforts have been greatly appreciated.

The Committee also would like to acknowledge Kathleen DiChiara, CEO of the Community Food Bank of New Jersey, and co-chair of HPAC for her years of dedicated service and wish her well in retirement.

**Background on the HPAC Legislation**

The New Jersey Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program Act (P.L. 2001, c62) was signed into law on April 19, 2001. The legislation appropriated $5 million in one-time Federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds. The program was established within the Department of Human Services (DHS) with the statutory purpose to:

* Improve the health and nutritional status of New Jersey residents in need of food assistance;
* Supplement the efforts of emergency food programs in the state to reduce hunger; and
* Enable families and individuals to become food secure and self-sufficient.

The specific goals of the program are to:

* Enhance the accessibility and availability of safe, nutritious food and food-related resources;
* Develop and provide comprehensive nutrition education programs;
* Periodically conduct assessments of the needs of persons requesting food assistance and hunger related issues to ensure program funds are used effectively; and
* Empower persons requesting food assistance or at risk of needing food assistance to increase their independence from emergency food assistance programs.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

According to the Hunger in America 2014 study, food insecurity refers to people being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food at some point during the last year. Nationally 14.5% of households are food insecure, with children being the most vulnerable due to the impact of food insecurity on health and cognitive development.[[1]](#footnote-1) One in five US households (20%) receives services through the Feeding America network of emergency food providers (EFPs), including food banks, pantries, and soup kitchens.

In New Jersey, the food insecurity rate is slightly lower at 13%, with 1,141,890 people being food insecure, according to Feeding America’s 2012 Food Insecurity and Food Costs in the US report. The same report cited Essex, Cumberland, Hudson, Atlantic and Passaic Counties with the highest food insecurity rates.

“The number of children living in extreme poverty – roughly $9,500 a year for a family of three – rose an alarming 32% from 2008 to 2012. For 81% of these families, housing costs consumed too large a share of family budgets, leaving less for other necessities such as food, clothing, or transportation.

This means “roughly one-third of New Jersey children live in families earning too little to meet their needs. The number of children living in families receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) continued to rise, increasing 65% to roughly 415,000 children in 2013. Likewise, the number of children eligible for free- or reduced-price school meals grew 22% from the 2008/2009 to 2012/2013 school years. While more children were receiving free-and reduced-price school breakfast in 2012, just 36% of eligible children received this meal in April 2013. Since then, significant progress has been made as more schools are implementing the school breakfast program. For school lunches, 78% of eligible students ate lunch at school. [[2]](#footnote-2)

According to the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) report entitled “School Breakfast Scorecard: 2013-2014 School year”, New Jersey was one of two states that saw the nation’s greatest rise in the percentage of low-income children participating in school breakfast last year, with a 12.9% increase compared to school year 2012/2013.[[3]](#footnote-3) New Jersey has moved up significantly from 48th to 28th in the nation for average daily student participation in free and reduced-price school breakfast and lunch programs in school year 2013/2014.[[4]](#footnote-4)

SNAP is New Jersey’s first line of defense in fighting hunger. SNAP benefits are supplemental in nature and New Jersey recipients report that their benefits last an average of 2.5 weeks.

Below you will find the New Jersey average monthly SNAP benefit, per recipient, as calculated by the Food and Nutrition Service’s (FNS) Thrifty Food Plan.

2010 $138.03

2011 $133.26

2012 $133.26

2013 $134.97

2014 $121.75

Given this benefit level, individuals and families who are food insecure are turning to New Jersey’s Emergency Food Providers (EFPs), which include food pantries and soup kitchens for additional food. The Feeding America 2014 study noted that 62% of feeding programs in New Jersey saw an increase in demand over the previous year. The EFPs also are reporting a decline in food donations.

The Community Food Pantry Fund, which is a donation feature on the NJ State Tax form, has generated revenue for the acquisition of healthy and nutritious food. According to the Department of Agriculture, the funding received from this tax check-off since it began in 2010 is as follows:

2010 Tax Year $33,495.16

2011 Tax Year $31,597.52

2012 Tax Year $ 4,981.91

2013 Tax Year $30,623.07 (estimated – last deposit is anticipated soon)

Of the $100,697.66 received since tax year 2010, $86,119.07 already has been issued to the Emergency Feeding Organizations (EFOs). The estimated $14,578.59 balance will be issued to the EFOs in early August along with any funds acquired in July 2015, from the 2014 tax year.

**QUICK FACTS:**

**About Hunger:**

* 1 in 6 people in America and 1 in 8 people in New Jersey experience hunger.
* In the United States, 20% of households with children are food insecure and 9% of the elderly living alone are food insecure.
* More and more people are relying on emergency food providers for supplemental food.
* Hunger isn’t caused by a lack of food but the continued prevalence of poverty.
* Nationwide, 1 in 7 people are enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance program (SNAP). Nearly half of them are children.
* Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) was activated in New Jersey when Tropical Storm Irene and Superstorm Sandy hit.
* New Jersey has six regional food banks that serve a network of emergency food providers statewide.

**According to the 2014 Hunger in America study for people utilizing emergency food provider services in the United States:**

* 89% are households with children;
* 69% of households had to choose between food and utilities;
* 67% had to choose between food and transportation;
* 66% had to choose between food and medical care;
* 57% had to choose between food and housing;
* 54% of households report that a least one household member has been employed in the past year. This rate is higher for households with children (71%), and slightly lower for households with seniors (34%);
* 41% of households had a least one adult member with an education beyond high school;
* 31% had to choose between food and educational expenses; and,
* The household median monthly income was $927; for households with children $1,106; and for households with seniors $1,146;

**According to the same study, people who utilize emergency food provider services use the following strategies to address their food insecurity:**

* 79% purchased inexpensive, unhealthy food;
* 56% ate food past the expiration date;
* 54% received help from family or friends;
* 40% water down food or drinks;
* 35% sell or pawn personal property;
* 23% grow food in a garden.

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**

The chart below from the DHS’ Division of Family Development’s Program Statistics indicates the number of households who have received SNAP benefits in 2001, 2006 and 2011 (five year increments) and each year since including 2012, 2013, and 2014.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Calendar Year Monthly Averages** | **Total Households** |
| **2001** | 133,883 |
| **2006** | 194,919 |
| **2011** | 367,113 |
| **2012** | 409,275 |
| **2013** | 428,903 |
| **2014** | 443,918 |

During the 13-year time frame from 2001 to 2014, the total numbers of households on SNAP increased by 310,035 cases or approximately a 30% increase. The most significant spike is noted in 2011 when New Jersey, along with the rest of the nation, was in the midst of the national recession. There was approximately a 53% caseload increase in the five-year period, from 2006 to 2011. During this time frame, there also were special outreach initiatives for seniors and individuals with categorical eligibility, for example, someone who already was determined eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

**Amount of Emergency Food Distributed**

The chart below illustrates the amount of food that was distributed in 2001, five years later in 2006, and ten years later in 2011, along with more recent distributions in 2012, 2013, and 2014. While the report was unable to calculate the overall statewide distribution of food in 2001, it is recognized that 34.8 million pounds of emergency food was distributed in 2006 and 68.5 million in 2014. This represents a 50.8% increase in the amount of emergency food distributed over the past eight years.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Agency** | **Pounds of food distributed in 2001, in millions** | **Pounds of food distributed in 2006, in millions** | **Pounds of food distributed in 2011, in millions** | **Pounds of food distributed in 2012, in millions** | **Pounds of food distributed in 2013, in millions** | **Pounds of food distributed in 2014, in millions** |
| Community Food Bank, Hillside | 17.9 | 21.2 | 38.1 | 39.7 | 40.6 | 43.4 |
| Community Food Bank of NJ – Southern Branch, Egg Harbor | 2.5 | 3.7 | Data included with the Community Food Bank as listed above | Data included with the Community Food Bank as listed above | Data included with the Community Food Bank as listed above | Data included with the Community Food Bank as listed above |
| Mercer Street Friends, Trenton | 1.1 | 1.6 | 2.6 | 2.4 | 2.4 | 2.5 |
| NORWESCAP Food Bank, Phillipsburg | 1.3 | 1.6 | 2.3 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 2.2 |
| Food Bank of Monmouth & Ocean Counties, Neptune | 2.55 | 3.3 | 6.9 | 7.0 | 8.2 | 10.0 |
| Food Bank of South Jersey, Pennsauken | Not available | 3.4 | 10.8 | 9.5 | 10.4 | 10.4 |
| **TOTAL** |  | **34.8** | **60.8** | **60.7** | **63.8** | **68.5** |

**Legislative Support Needed**

* The November 2000 legislation creating the HPAC allocated funding in the amount of $5 million for hunger prevention efforts. That funding was exhausted in 2010. The committee continues its vital work without funding.
* The Committee is requesting additional seats on HPAC for representation from the Departments of Education and Children and Families as childhood hunger is a growing issue in New Jersey, as identified in the executive summary section of this report.
* Pass A-4030 that proposes a “Breakfast after the Bell” incentive fund, which as of June 15, 2015 was reported out of the Assembly Committee, for a second reading. This legislation proposes that the Department of Agriculture, in consultation with the Department of Education, develop and administer an incentive fund that would provide a 10-cent per breakfast supplement to the existing federal reimbursement to school districts that participate in the federal school breakfast program. The goal is to provide an incentive for school districts to move to a school breakfast model that will reach more hungry students since low-to middle-income school districts face more fiscal challenges in covering the cost of an effective breakfast program. The estimated cost is $6 million.
* Pass A-3889 which proposes a “Breakfast Kiosk Pilot” program. This legislation which was reported and referred to the Assembly Appropriations Committee on January 15, 2015 would require the Department of Agriculture, in consultation with the Department of Education, to develop and administer a two-year school breakfast kiosk pilot program in three school districts selected by the Commissioner of Education, in the northern, central, and southern regions of the state. The goal of the program is to increase the participation of students in school breakfast through increased accessibility to breakfast items in the school. The program will help more children start the school day with a nutritious breakfast in order to learn, grow, and develop to their full potential. The estimated cost is $200,000.

**HPAC Goals for Calendar Year 2015**

* Support funding to the emergency food providers for the distribution, storage and handling of food, as well as for replacing equipment such as stoves, refrigerators, freezers, walk-in boxes and generators to protect refrigerated and frozen food. Estimated cost $1 million.
* Promote the tax check off box to obtain funding for New Jersey’s Emergency Food Providers through press releases and other outreach strategies and review the outcome of how funds were utilized.
* Continue to promote outreach efforts to assist New Jerseyans who are food insecure.
* Support/promote National Hunger Action Month in New Jersey by having the Governor issue a proclamation declaring September as Hunger Action Month in New Jersey.

**Hunger Prevention Advisory Committee Membership**

The New Jersey Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program Act established a 13 member Hunger Prevention Advisory Committee (HPAC) in the Department of Human Services. The membership consists of the Secretary of Agriculture, Commissioner of Human Services, and the Commissioner of Community Affairs or their designees, who serve ex-officio and ten public members appointed by the Governor that include: two representatives of emergency food programs in the State; two representatives of programs serving homeless individuals in the State; the Executive Directors of the County Welfare Directors’ Association of New Jersey; the Municipal Welfare Director’s Association of New Jersey and the Association for Children of New Jersey (currently known as the Advocates for Children of New Jersey), or their designees; a nutritionist, and two members of the public who are knowledgeable about emergency food programs. The 13-member HPAC has been meeting since 2002. The committee currently is comprised of the following individuals:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **HPAC member** | **Agency** | **Seat** | **Term Expires** |
| Gina Adams | Volunteers of America Delaware Valley | Programs Servicing Homeless Individuals | January 2014 |
| Shawn Sheekey | Camden County Board of Social Services | NJ County Welfare Director’s Association | Indefinite |
| Kathleen DiChiara  (Co-chair) | Community Food Bank of New Jersey | Emergency Food Programs | January 2014 |
| Rosemary Gilmartin | Interfaith Food Pantry | Emergency Food Programs | January 2014 |
| Vesta Godwin Clark | St. James Social Services Corporation | Programs Serving Homeless Individuals | January 2014 |
| Susan Jones | Henry J. Austin Health Center | Nutritionist | January 2014 |
| Barbara Miceli | Middletown Municipal Welfare Director | Municipal Welfare Directors’ Association | Indefinite |
| Natasha Johnson (For Acting Commissioner Elizabeth Connolly) | Department of Human Services | Department of Human Services  Division of Family Development | Indefinite |
| Chip Paillex  (Co-chair) | America’s Grow-A-Row | Knowledge of Emergency Food Programs | January 2014 |
| Sheldon Presser  (for Cecilia Zalkind) | Advocates for Children of New Jersey (formerly known as Association for Children of New Jersey) | Advocates for Children of New Jersey | Indefinite |
| Pat Swartz  (for Acting Commissioner Charles Richman) | Department of Community Affairs | Department of Community Affairs | Indefinite |
| Rose Tricario (for Secretary Douglas H. Fisher) | Department of Agriculture | Department of Agriculture | Indefinite |
| Vacant |  | Knowledge of Emergency Food Programs | January 2014 |

**HPAC Expenditures**

As of June 2011, HPAC has exhausted all of the funding from the original $5 million allocation in the New Jersey Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program Act. The funds were disbursed as follows:

**$90,000** For gleaning (funds to the Department of Agriculture)

**$600,000** Funds for the acquisition of Food (distributed to the six regional food banks during CY 2002)

**$1,500,000** Funds for the acquisition of Food (distributed to the six regional food banks (CY 2004)

**$500,000** Funds for the acquisition of food (distributed to the six regional food banks 1/1/05-6/2005

**$250,000** Rutgers Study (Legislatively mandated) – completed in 2005

**$500,000** To Department of Agriculture to support emergency feeding organizations ($125,000 for four years)

**$1,000,000** Funds for the acquisition of food (distributed to the six regional food banks 11/05)

**$250,000** Funds for the acquisitions of food (distributed to the six regional food banks 7/08)

**$310,000** Funds for the acquisition of food (distributed to the six regional food banks 1/10)

**$5,000,000** Total Expenditures

**$0** Balance Available

1. 2014 Hunger in America study, page 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 2014 New Jersey Kids Count Report, page 8 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Food Research Action Center, School Breakfast Scorecard 2013/2014 School Year report, page 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Food Research and Action Center, School Breakfast Scorecard: 2013/2014 School Year report, page 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)