October 13, 2026

3rd Annual

Garden State Conference on Food Security

Office of the Food Security Advocate

Catalyzing Classrooms: Helping K-12 Families Make the Grade in Becoming Food Secure

Dr. Dan Dychtwald — Moderator

Program Manager
Office of the Food Security Advocate

Dr. Dan Dychtwald, PhD, MPH, MS, joined the Office of the Food Security Advocate (OFSA) in May of 2024 as a Program Manager/Government Representative.

In this role, Dr. Dychtwald supports the director in coordinating efforts with state agency directors and program leaders in building strong relationships in facilitation of interdepartmental food security efforts. Dan also leads policy efforts preparing briefs and related documents outlining federal and state social safety net programs affecting food security while also keeping the team current on such legislation. He also supports strategic statewide planning efforts, grant preparation and writing, and provides technical and professional coordination and leadership in the execution of programming and project activities. Dan received his PhD in Nutrition from Drexel University, along with a Master in Public Health Management and Policy degree and a Master in Nutrition degree. At Drexel, Dan assisted in several studies in oncology, public health, and gender equity, leading to his thesis and dissertation exploring the roles of men with the WIC program.

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The research helped lead Dan to work with Philadelphia's Department of Public Health and into advocacy work on behalf of fathers.

During his time at Drexel, Dan also served as the State Policy Representative and Public Policy Chair for the New Jersey Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Prior to joining OFSA, Dan was with Rutgers Cooperative Extension and the Department of Family and Community Health Sciences where he served as the Senior Program Administrator for the SNAP-Ed program covering four South Jersey counties. Before that, Dan was a Senior Project Manager with Rutgers Institute for Health where he managed several National Institutes of Health (NIH) and foundation-funded research studies.
Outside of the office, Dan is a devoted uncle to two amazing young women, continues to advocate for causes dear to him, and is a consummate news junkie. His spare time is spent in the kitchen trying new recipes and creating healthier versions of childhood favorites.

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Dr. Ayodeji Oyedeji

Panelist

Senior Project Manager
Community Health Worker Hub (CHW), Acenda

Dr. Ayodeji Oyedeji is the Senior Project Manager of the Community Health Worker (CHW) Hub and also oversees food security initiatives within Acenda Integrated Health.

Dr. Ayodeji Oyedeji is the Senior Project Manager of the Community Health Worker (CHW) Hub and also oversees food security initiatives within Acenda Integrated Health. He holds a PhD in Health Services Research from the University of Sheffield and is interested in the intersection of mental health, chronic conditions, and health-related social needs. His focus is on developing practical solutions that improve outcomes for individuals with coexisting conditions, particularly within underserved populations.

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Lisa Pitz

Panelist

Executive Director,
Hunger Free NJ (CFANJ)

Lisa Pitz is the Director of Hunger Free New Jersey, the leading statewide anti-hunger advocacy organization working to change policy and practice to ensure that all New Jerseyans have access to healthy food.

Lisa has served in a variety of roles at Hunger Free New Jersey for over 24 years, working with a broad group of community partners throughout the state to educate the public and policy makers about hunger and to create policy and program solutions that improve access to critical nutrition assistance programs like SNAP, school meals, summer and afterschool meals and senior nutrition programs. Lisa has a Master of Social Work degree and over 30 years' experience working on hunger, poverty, and social justice issues.

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Kate Russo

Panelist

Planning Administrator
Somerset County Department of Human Services

Kate Russo is a strategic, mission-driven leader with more than 20 years of experience advancing community impact through human services, nonprofit leadership, strategic planning, organizational development, and community engagement.

She currently serves as a Planning Administrator with the Somerset County Department of Human Services, leading assessments, special projects, and initiatives that strengthen services and support the community.

In her role with Somerset County, Kate leads innovative initiatives addressing food insecurity, community engagement, and mental health. Her work brings together government, nonprofit, philanthropic, business, and community partners to develop practical solutions that reach residents where they live, work, and access services. She has helped advance countywide efforts including community canvassing, food access mapping, embedded Human Services Navigator, the Somerset County Food Coalition, and initiatives designed to connect residents with critical resources and support.

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Panelist

Planning Administrator
Somerset County Department of Human Services

Prior to joining Somerset County, Kate spent 17 years with the YMCA, where she held leadership roles focused on organizational strategy, community partnerships, fundraising, program development, and operational excellence.

Her career has been defined by her ability to build strong teams, cultivate partnerships, secure resources, navigate organizational change, and turn ideas into sustainable programs that create measurable community impact.

Kate holds a Bachelor of Science in Health and Physical Education from Old Dominion University and a Master's degree from Springfield College. Fun Fact: she is also a licensed esthetician with more than 20 years of experience in the skincare and wellness field.

Throughout her career, Kate has been recognized for her collaborative and innovative leadership style and her commitment to equity, inclusion, community engagement, and creating systems that work better for the people they serve.

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Cyndi Tufaro

Panelist

Principal
James Monroe Elementary

Cynthia Tufaro is an elementary school principal in the Edison Township Public Schools with more than 30 years of experience in education and leadership.

At James Monroe Elementary School, she leads more than 500 students and 100 staff members, with a focus on student leadership, family engagement, and strengthening the school community.

Mrs. Tufaro has helped cultivate schoolwide initiatives focused on food security, engaging students as advocates and leaders while connecting families with resources and local partners. She also served as Executive Director of The Marisa Tufaro Foundation for ten years, a nonprofit supporting children and families throughout Middlesex County.