Reducing Food Insecurity in Your Municipality

New Jersey League of Municipalities Conference

November 18, 2021
Food Waste & Food Insecurity

Presented by Dr. Sara A. Elnakib, PhD, MPH, RDN
BEFORE COVID-19:

- **219,760** Hungry NJ Kids
- **777,860** Hungry NJ Residents
- **38%** Of NJ Households receiving SNAP benefits have children

1 In 11 New Jerseyans Struggle with Hunger
1 In 9 New Jersey Children Struggle with Hunger

HUNGER IS ON THE RISE
HUNGER ON THE RISE

• COVID-19 has driven NJ Food Insecurity rates significantly beyond levels seen during the 2008 recession with a current food insecurity rate of about **13.5%** now compared to 12.3% in 2008

• The total number of food-insecure New Jerseyans has increased by **56%** compared to 46% nationally

• The number of food insecure children in New Jersey has increased by **75%** with 1 in 5 children now experiencing food insecurity compared to 1 in 9 in 2019.

• Overall, more than **1.2 million** New Jersey residents are now food insecure, including 431,000 newly food insecure individuals
LINKAGES BETWEEN HUNGER, POVERTY, AND HEALTH DURING COVID-19
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<th><strong>NJ YMCA RESPONSE</strong></th>
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YMCA IMPACT SNAPSHOT

Expanding Meal Distribution as part of Regular CACFP/SFSP Programming:
NJ YMCAs expanded meal distribution through CACFP and SFSP programming.

- NJ YMCAs provided 724,342 CACFP/SFSP meals from March to December 2020.
- NJ YMCAs provided an additional 223,612 CACFP/SFSP meals from April – August 2021.
YMCA IMPACT SNAPSHOT CONT.

Supporting COVID-19 Relief Food Distributions:

- Through partnerships with NJ food banks, NJ YMCAs have distributed **50,189 boxes** of shelf stable, emergency food.
- NJ YMCAs participated in the initial phases of the USDA’s Farm to Family Food Box program and provided **86,682 fresh produce boxes** to families.
  - When the program ended, NJYSA raised funds to support local YMCAs in purchasing and distributing an additional **10,524 boxes** of fresh produce.
- Altogether, NJ YMCAs have supported the distribution of **2,149,115 pounds** of shelf stable food and fresh produce to food insecure families.
- YMCAs also provided **1,106,178 meals** through grant funded programs and restaurant partnerships.
HOW CAN YOUR MUNICIPALITY TAKE ACTION AGAINST FOOD INSECURITY?

Sustainable Jersey Food Actions:
- Expanded Supplemental Food Programs
- Community Food Pantries
- Farmers Markets
- Accessible Farmer’s Markets (*Coming soon!*)

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USING AN EQUITY LENS: INVOLVING YOUR COMMUNITY

- Connect with existing programs, partners, and champions
- Identify opportunities for supporting and enhancing existing programs when possible
- Address gaps in service whenever possible
- Consider cultural and religious food considerations that may be common in your community
EXPANDED SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD PROGRAMS

- Summer Food Service Program
- Child and Adult Care Food Program
COMMUNITY FOOD PANTRIES

Municipalities can play an active role in setting up and supporting community food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens.
FARMERS MARKETS AND ACCESSIBILITY
RESOURCES AND MORE INFORMATION

- www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/fn/childadult/summer_food.html
- www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/fn/childadult/food.html
- https://www.sustainablejersey.com/actions/
- https://hungerfreenj.org/feeding-nj-kids/
- https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/njsnap/
- https://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank
THANK YOU

Jackie Bavaro, MPH
Sr. State Program Coordinator
NJ YMCA State Alliance
Jackie.Bavaro@yalliance.org
What is Rutgers Cooperative Extension

Rutgers Cooperative Extension is the outreach arm of Rutgers University; we provide education and outreach to all 21 counties of NJ.

Who We Are

There are 3 main departments of Rutgers Cooperative Extension

- Family & Community Health Sciences
- 4-H: Youth Development
- Agriculture and Natural Resources
How We Are Funded

Federal
The United States Department of Agriculture - National Institute of Food and Agriculture

State
Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey & New Jersey Legislature through the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station

Local
County Commissioners under different Departments or Offices depending on the county
WHY IS FOOD WASTE IMPORTANT?

Environmental
Social
Economic Impacts
In the US we waste 30%-40% of our food system.

On average, each person wastes more than 20 pounds of food per month.

80 billion pounds each year.

Enough to fill the Empire State Building 1,000 times.

Background on Food Waste

Waste 360 Lets talk Turkey... And Food Waste Beyond the Thanksgiving Table (Retrieved May 13, 2020)

How Can We Support Affordable, Nutritious Diets? Reduce Wasted Food USDA (Retrieved May 13, 2020)
https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2015/10/20/how-can-we-support-affordable-nutritious-diets-reduce-wasted-food
Why Food Waste Matters

Environmental Impact
The FAO estimates that if FW globally was a country, it would be the 3rd largest emitter of greenhouse gas after China and the US.

Economic Impact
Wasting 30-40% of the food we grow in the US is equal to throwing away $161-$218 billion per year.

Social Impact
10.5% or 13.7 million U.S. households were food insecure, yet we throw out food that is very nutritious.
Where Does Food Loss & Food Waste Happen?

On September 16, 2015, the first-ever national food loss and waste goal in the United States was launched, calling for a 50% reduction by 2030.

In August 2017, the first Food Waste legislation in New Jersey was passed. Bill S3027 establishes that NJ will reduce its Municipal Solid Food Waste by 50% come 2030.
How to Reduce Food Waste?
WHY FOOD DONATION IS SO IMPORTANT?

Food Insecurity
COVID
13% of NJ residents face food insecurity EVERY DAY

192,580 of those facing food insecurity are children in NJ

NJSHAD: Complete Health Indicator Report of Food Insecurity (2021)
Consequences of Food Insecurity

- Increased risk for Type 2 Diabetes, High Blood Pressure, Heart Disease and Obesity.

- Negative impacts on children’s ability to learn.

- Lost work productivity

We understand Food Donation doesn’t solve root causes but is critical for channeling appropriate food to people in need.
State of Food Donation

- More than 3.5 billion pounds donated per year in the US
- Federal and State Legislation support food donation
- To date there has not been one single food donation legal action
- There is room to grow:
  - Institutions like schools, hotels, colleges, event centers
  - Grocery can donate fruit, vegetables, dairy, frozen, meat and deli
3. HOW CAN HEALTH INSPECTORS HELP?

Tools to support communities with licensed food establishments donate more
### COMMON MYTHS THAT DETER FOOD DONATION

- "The city won’t let us donate food"
- "We are liable if something goes wrong"
- "We would have to transport the food ourselves"
Food Recovery for Food Security: Reducing Barriers to Food Donation Action

This action awards points to municipalities by promoting and facilitating food “waste” recovery to improve food security for residents by:

(1) implementing a policy on training health inspectors and municipal representatives, and

(2) conducting outreach to food surplus and food rescue organizations on the value of food donations and the best practices for ensuring their safety and quality.
Food Recovery for Food Security: Reducing Barriers to Food Donation Action

Health inspectors and municipal representatives training:

- One-hour self-paced FREE training on food donation
  - Food Waste Impacts
  - Food Security Issues
  - Food Donation Laws
  - Food Safety Considerations

Certificate of completion sent by Rutgers Cooperative Extension
Food Recovery for Food Security: Reducing Barriers to Food Donation Action

Health inspectors and municipal representatives to conduct outreach to local businesses to support food donation.

- Distribute factsheets on food donation and food safety
- Provide a list of Food Rescue Organization that can accept donations
  - Advertisement can include in person events as well as other municipal channels
    - Website, social media accounts, food donation events
  - Adopt this training & outreach as municipal policy (e.g., by resolution or shared services contract)
Contact Information

For questions, comments, and inquiries

Phone Number: 973-305-5746
Email Address: elnakisa@njaes.rutgers.edu
Website: www.passaic.njaes.rutgers.edu/fchs
New Jersey Food Democracy Collaborative: a state-level food system advocacy network

- Foster collaboration across sectors
- Focus on state-level public policy & process change
- Center resilience, equity, and regenerative solutions
- Advocate for collaborative food system governance at the state level
Inspired by the **Food Policy Council Model**
Food Policy Council: a tool in the toolbox of food system governance

An organization that brings together a broad array of people from each part of the food system to improve food security for a city, region, or state.

* Collaboration & Coordination
* Policy & Programs
Who participates on food policy councils?

- Farmers
- Market Managers
- Food retailers
- Healthcare organizations
- Anti-hunger groups
- Elected officials
- Cooperative Extension

- Government officials from:
  - Environment and natural resources
  - Zoning and land use
  - Public health
  - Planning
  - Housing
  - Transportation
  - Economic Development
How does Government Participate in Food Policy Councils?

Geographic focus of FPCs

Percent of FPCs by geographic level of focus (n= 198)

**Food Policy Councils in our Region**

**New Jersey:** 3 (Passaic County FPC, New Brunswick Community Food Alliance, NJFDC). *More data is needed.*

**Delaware:** 1 Delaware Council on Farm & Food Policy, led by Secretary of Ag

**Pennsylvania:** 10 most are county-level councils

**Maryland:** 5 including MA Food System Resiliency Council, a government appointed body

**Connecticut:** 5 including a state-level FPC in Dept of Ag

**Massachusetts:** 17 a state-level FPC & a nonprofit alliance of local councils

**New York:** 10 most are county-level or multi-county-level/regional councils
What do Food Policy Councils do?

- Community Food Assessments & Municipal Food Policy Audits
- ‘Good Food’ Action Plans or Food Equity Action Plans
- Increase consumption and/or production of local ag products
- Foster community-led problem solving for food access challenges
- Coordination of emergency food sector organizations
- Food waste recovery planning & programming
- Advocate for funding for food & farming programs
- A voice for healthy food & farming in public sphere
Is a Food Policy Council in your municipality’s future?

**Important considerations:**

- Is there already a multi-sector group in your town or region convening to address food insecurity or other community food system issue?
- If so, How can you support or enhance that effort?
- How can the existing FPC be more fully reflective of your local food system? More inclusive and diverse?
- If not, how can municipal governments partner/collaborate with other community leaders to establish a FPC? How can leadership be shared?
- What is the best role for municipal government?
Is a Food Policy Council in your municipality’s future?

Important considerations:

- Is the municipal level the appropriate scale for the FPC?
- How can neighboring towns work together to address interconnected food access issues?
Sustainable Jersey Actions for Improving Local Food Policy

Possibilities for SJ Actions:
- Participation in or support for a FPC
- Community Food Policy Assessment or Food System Equity Assessment
- Food System Planning element
- Food Waste Recovery
- Mitigating emissions from agriculture
- SNAP outreach and promotion
- Food security data collection
Thank you!

Connect with the NJFDC
On
Instagram
fooddemocracycollaborative_nj/

Facebook
facebook.com/fooddemocracycollabNJ
2022 Sustainable Jersey Grants Program

Cycle Funded By:
PSEG Foundation

Applications Due:
Friday, Feb 11

Need Funding? Sustainable Jersey Grants Available
Learn more during an informational webinar on December 13. Applications due Friday, February 11, 2022.

Sustainable Jersey Municipal Certification Program

81% of municipalities are participating and 89% of NJ's population lives in these communities

460 Participating Municipalities
224 Certified Municipalities
13,763 Actions Approved

159 Bronze Certified
65 Silver Certified
1 Total Gold Stars Awarded

Find green team contacts and learn how certified communities successfully completed Sustainable Jersey actions.

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<th>Description</th>
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Gold Star in Health Framework

Complete a Local Health Assessment & Action Plan

- **Required Action**
- **“High Impact” Actions**

**Municipal Governance**
1. Best Practices for Local Boards of Health
2. Integrating Health in Municipal Decision-Making
3. Diversity on Boards & Commissions
4. Improving Public Engagement in Municipal Governing

**Environmental Quality**

**Water Quality**
1. Enhanced Stormwater Management Control Ordinance
2. Green Infrastructure Implementation
3. Private Well Outreach & Testing
4. Removing Lead in Drinking Water
5. Green Infrastructure Planning
6. Household Hazardous Waste

**Air Quality**
1. Anti-Idling Education & Enforcement Program
2. Community Forestry Management Plan
3. Tobacco-Free Community

**Land Use, Development, & Built Environment**

**Housing**
1. Healthy Homes Inspection & Training
2. Residential Energy Efficiency Outreach
3. Comprehensive Lead Strategy Action
4. Lead and Housing Hazards Data-Sharing
5. Lead Education & Outreach

**Individual Health & Community Wellness**

**Food Access**
1. Community Food Pantries
2. Expanded Supplemental Food Programs
3. Buy Fresh, Buy Local Programs
4. Community Gardens
5. Farmers Markets
6. Farmland Preservation Plans
7. Making Farmers Markets Accessible

**Transportation & Mobility**

**Wellness & Recreation**
Sustainable Jersey Supporters & Sponsors

Program Underwriters

PLATINUM
- The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation
- New Jersey's Clean Energy Program
- PSEG Foundation
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

GOLD
- Grants Program
- PSEG Foundation

SILVER
- Corporate Sponsors
- Gardinier Environmental Fund
- Gold
- Amazon

BRONZE
- New Jersey Natural Gas
- South Jersey Gas
- Atlantic Health System
- Ocean Wind
- Northfield Bank
- NJ AEG

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