



HUNGER

THE FACES & THE FACTS



ALAMEDA COUNTY
COMMUNITY
FOOD BANK

Executive Summary

Hunger

The physical and mental condition that results from not eating enough food due to insufficient economic, social and community resources.

Food Insecurity

The lack of nutritionally adequate, safe, and culturally acceptable food, available through non-emergency sources at all times.

Food Bank

A food bank is a central clearinghouse for donated and government surplus food.

Donated food from individuals and corporations is collected, sorted and stored at food banks before being distributed to direct service providers like food pantries, soup kitchens or shelters.

In Alameda County, the Food Bank also offers nutrition education services and an emergency food referral helpline.

Tens of thousands of low-income Alameda County residents cannot afford meals for themselves and their families. Many never imagined they would need to request food assistance, but barren cupboards and empty pockets lead more than 40,000 of our community members to local soup kitchens and food pantries every week.

The demand for emergency food has increased steadily throughout the Food Bank's 20-year history. The events of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent recession at the beginning of this decade have resulted in even greater challenges for low-income people. In the Bay Area, residents experienced a slower economic recovery with regard to the job market even as the cost of living continued to increase. Since our last study in 2001, 70% of Alameda County Community Food Bank's pantries reported an increase in the number of clients served.

The Alameda County Community Food Bank participated in this national study of hunger to better understand the realities of individuals seeking emergency food assistance. The study was coordinated by America's Second Harvest—the Nation's Food Bank Network,[™] of which the Alameda County Community Food Bank is an affiliate, and Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.



Hunger: The Faces & Facts 2006 presents the results of a survey of 407 households, selected at random, who turned to one of the Food Bank's emergency food programs in the spring of 2005. The key findings from our study are summarized below.

The Food Bank hopes this report will not only inform policymakers and the general public about the circumstances of people who request emergency food assistance, but that it will also inspire community and government actions to end hunger.

Key Finding

1

Children are the most vulnerable to hunger

- 35% of emergency food recipients are children under the age of 18.
- 25% of client households with children report that their children skipped meals due to a lack of food and money in the previous 12 months.
- In 38% of client households with children, either a parent, a child or both experience hunger.



“I commend the Food Bank for bringing public attention to this sad and unnecessary situation and for working to end hunger in Alameda County.”

— Barbara Boxer, United States Senator

Key Finding 2 Seniors experience hunger in significant numbers

- 18% of all emergency food recipients are seniors age 50 and over. However, among clients who visit emergency food program sites, 33% are over age 50.
- 14% of client households report Social Security is their main source of income.
- The average income in Alameda County from Social Security is only \$12,455 per year.

Key Finding 3 Households struggle with employment

- 38% percent of client households have at least one employed family member.
- 41% of clients not currently working have been unemployed for more than two years.
- 36% of Food Bank clients never finished high school; the comparable percentage for the entire U.S population is only 15%.

Key Finding 4 Federal nutrition programs are underutilized

- 21% of client households receive food stamp benefits while an estimated 70% have incomes that would qualify for the Food Stamp Program. However, 65% of client households report recently applying for food stamps.
- 82% of client households report that their food stamp benefits do not last the entire month; on average food stamps last for 2.4 weeks.
- 45% of client households who have never applied for food stamps say they don't think they are eligible because of income or assets; of these households 36% were likely income eligible.

Key Finding 5 Cost of living skyrockets while wages stagnate

- 61% of client households have incomes below the federal poverty line.
- The median monthly income of client households is \$800; median monthly income for all Alameda County households is \$5,144 per month.
- 47% of clients have had to choose between paying for food or rent.

Soup Kitchen

Soup kitchens provide cooked meals to needy families or individuals on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. A majority of clients are elderly or homeless individuals who do not have access to a place where they can cook for themselves. The Food Bank currently helps to supply 58 soup kitchens in Alameda County.

Food Pantry

Pantries, often located at churches or community centers, operate on a weekly or monthly basis, distributing bags of food to low-income households. The Food Bank currently helps to supply 124 food pantries in Alameda County.

Shelter

Shelters provide temporary housing on a nightly or monthly basis to single men and women, seniors, youth and families who are homeless. Shelters provide food on a regular basis, generally breakfast and dinner. The Food Bank currently helps to supply 25 shelters in Alameda County.

Policy Recommendations



Address the Root Causes of Hunger

To end hunger, the community must address the root causes of hunger and poverty by supporting wages, work and education, building affordable communities for low-income families and strengthening government safety net programs.

Support Wages, Work and Education

- Increase the minimum wage and create jobs with more sustainable wages that allow families who are working to meet basic needs.
- Support the creation of a state or county earned income tax credit and work to ensure that Alameda County families receive the federal earned income and child tax credits that are due to them.
- Facilitate effective transitions to economic independence for people leaving the welfare system by creating education and employment opportunities, ensuring safe and affordable child care and providing transportation options.

Build Affordable Communities

- Increase the number of affordable housing units.
- Support the full-funding of subsidized housing programs.
- Improve access to nutritious food in low-income neighborhoods.

Strengthen Government Safety Net Programs

- Ensure adequate unemployment, cash welfare and Social Security and Supplemental Security benefits.
- Offer basic health care coverage for all low-income families.

Strengthen Federal Nutrition Programs

The Food Bank encourages policymakers to strengthen federal nutrition initiatives by improving the Food Stamp Program and expanding the reach of child nutrition programs such as WIC and school meals.

Improve Food Stamp Program

- Simplify the Food Stamp Program and application procedures so that the program is more responsive to the needs of working families, the elderly and the disabled.

- Increase food stamp benefits and reinstate benefits for all residents with eligible incomes.
- Maintain and facilitate access to the Food Stamp Program among immigrant communities.

Increase and Expand Child Nutrition Programs

- Adequately fund the WIC program to serve all women, infants and children who qualify.
- Increase the number of school meal, summer lunch and after-school snack sites providing nutritious food to low-income children by simplifying the enrollment process.

Encourage Eligible Families to Participate

- Fund outreach campaigns for all federal nutrition programs.

Expand Food Bank Services

The Food Bank is committed to strategically expanding its services to meet emerging needs identified in this study.

Assist More People in Need

- Expand Food Bank services in underserved areas of Alameda County.
- Provide support to the Food Bank's network of member agencies to develop food distribution programs to better meet the needs of low-income working families.
- Coordinate more supplemental food delivery programs for seniors and the homebound.
- Increase the number of non-English speaking communities served.

Enhance Existing Services

- Continue to improve the nutritional quality of food provided to Food Bank member agencies.
- Help Food Bank member agencies link clients to other critical services such as government nutrition programs, housing, health services and job training.

To learn more about how you can help end hunger, visit www.accfb.org.



7900 Edgewater Dr.
Oakland, CA 94621
Phone (510) 635 3663
Fax (510) 635 3773

www.accfb.org
info@accfb.org