

**A BLUEPRINT
TO END HUNGER**
2008

Acknowledgments

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A BLUEPRINT TO END HUNGER

Hunger should have no place at our table. It is inconsistent with our commitment to human rights and objectionable to the American values of fairness, opportunity, family and community.

Millennium Declaration to End Hunger in America

HUNGER IN AMERICA

The United States is the largest and most efficient food producer in the world. Yet, each year more than 35.5 million Americans face a constant struggle against hunger, including more than 12.6 million children. These numbers would be even greater if Americans were not a caring people, quick to respond to human suffering and mindful of the responsibility that wealth brings. But, despite our abundance and charitable spirit, we have failed to assure that every American is adequately fed. Instead, some children rely on a free school lunch as their only meal of the day. Many older people eat too little to maintain their health and many working parents often skip meals so that their children can eat.

Hungry people can be found in every city, county and state in America: the ill effects of hunger touch everyone in some way. *The study The Economic Cost of Domestic Hunger: Estimated Annual Burden to the United States* finds that the U.S. pays more than \$90 billion annually for the direct and indirect costs of hunger-related charities, illness and psychosocial dysfunction and the impact of less education/lower productivity. These costs are borne by all Americans. Still, an end to hunger can be achieved if we all work together.

The root cause of hunger is a lack of adequate purchasing power in millions of households. When individuals and families do not have the resources to buy enough food, the result is hunger. As a nation, we must encourage work and also ensure all who work that the results of their labor will be sufficient to provide for the basic needs of their families. For those unemployed or disabled, or too old or young to support themselves, other means can ensure sufficient income to protect them from hunger.

Many steps can be taken to help families achieve independence and security: a strong economy; an adequate minimum wage that, like the one a generation ago, lifts a small family out of poverty; private and public sector provision of jobs and job training; strategies to create and increase assets among working families; social insurance protection for the unemployed and retired; and child care, refundable tax credits, Supplemental Nutrition

Assistance Program (SNAP)—formerly named the Food Stamp Program—benefits; and health insurance that reward work efforts of families trying to make ends meet.

In 2004, the National Anti-Hunger Organizations (NAHO) issued the Blueprint to End Hunger - mapping out an effective and targeted strategy to address hunger throughout the United States. Some progress has been made since that time. Critical new investments were made in nutrition programs as part of the 2008 Farm Bill, including some of the policies advocated in the first Blueprint. But sadly much work remains, and many of the policies called for in the original Blueprint still apply.

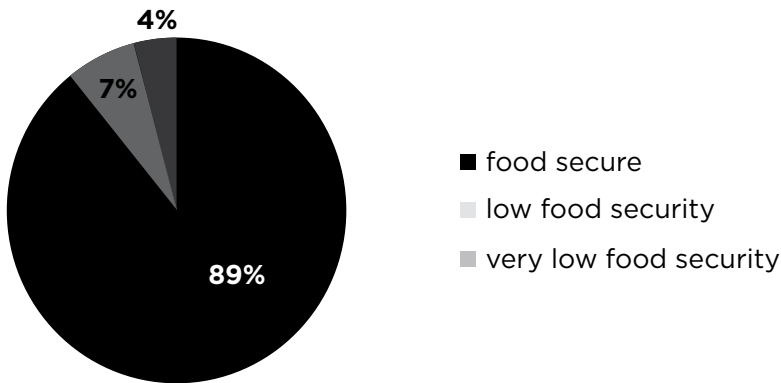
Five years later, this updated Blueprint outlines the steps still left to take if we are to finally eradicate hunger from our midst.

THE DESIRE TO END HUNGER

Both the United States and the world community have long been committed to reducing hunger. At the 1974 World Food Conference, countries pledged to eradicate global hunger within a decade. While that goal was not met, heartening progress was made over the past three decades. The proportion of undernourished people in developing nations was cut in half, and the number of undernourished people in the world declined. The downward trend in the number of hungry and malnourished people has reversed in recent years due to the spike in global food prices, but our success in reducing hunger in the developing world suggests that eradicating hunger is an achievable goal for industrialized nations. In industrialized countries, the United States is the only nation that still tolerates widespread hunger within its borders.

At the 1996 World Food Summit, the United States and nearly all other nations of the world pledged to cut in half the number of hungry people worldwide by 2015. For domestic hunger, the U.S. government committed itself to a more ambitious goal of cutting U.S. food insecurity in half by 2010. But progress against hunger in the United States has been marginal and intermittent - far below the rate needed to reach the 2010 goal. We believe it is important to keep moving

FOOD SECURITY STATUS OF U.S. HOUSEHOLDS



toward this ambitious but achievable goal. We call on the nation to cut U.S. hunger in half – and eliminate childhood hunger – by 2015.

Over the years, U.S. leaders have worked together in a bipartisan fashion to develop national nutrition programs, such as the child nutrition programs, SNAP and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). These programs have been successful in helping to reduce U.S. hunger and are largely responsible for eradicating the kind of hunger and malnutrition that still exists in the developing world. These programs continue to serve as a major bulwark against hunger. But despite their effectiveness, the programs are under-funded and fail to reach many people who need food assistance. By strengthening the programs and improving people's access to them, the United States can do much more to reduce hunger.

THE SOLUTION

The fastest, most direct way to reduce hunger is to improve and expand federal nutrition programs so they can provide people at risk of hunger with the resources they need to buy food for an adequate diet. SNAP provides families with an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card to buy food. If we are to make real progress against hunger, SNAP must be further improved and expanded. Child nutrition and congregate feeding programs for seniors, which are designed to help the most vulnerable people – children, seniors and the disabled – also must be enhanced. By working together, state and local governments, schools, nonprofit organizations and other community groups can ensure that these national nutrition programs and local anti-hunger efforts best complement and build on each other.

We know what to do to reduce hunger, but these changes will not be achieved without stronger political commitment in America. A national movement is needed that calls on everyone – from the President to the average citizen – to act to end widespread hunger. Concerned Americans across the country must

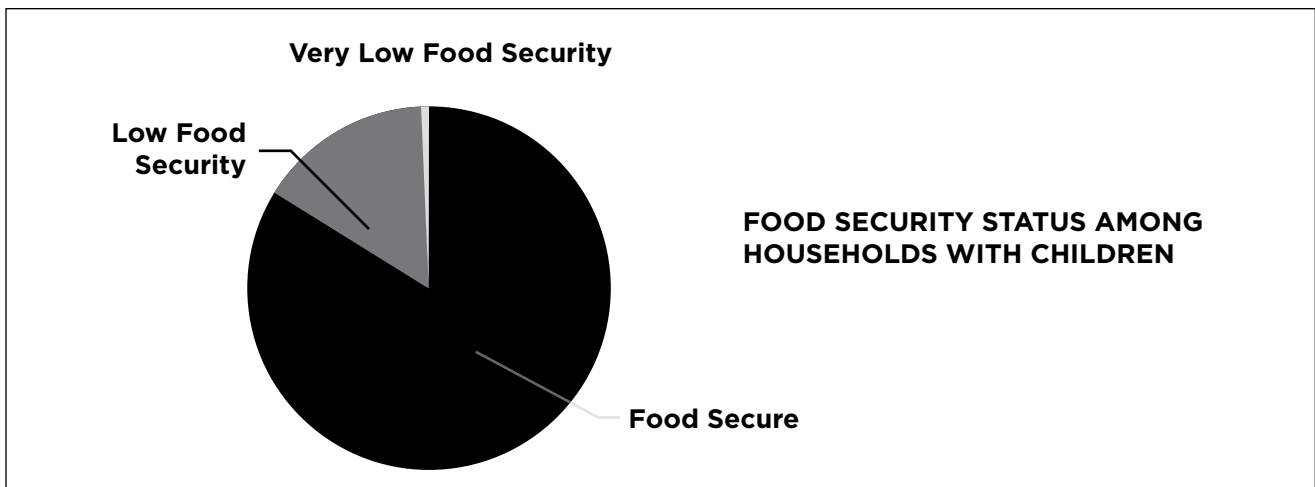
join together and insist that the President, Congress, state and community-based leaders transform this knowledge into action.

Much progress has been made. In particular, the states and the federal government have made program integrity and payment accuracy top priorities and have achieved remarkable success in reducing program error rates. It is essential to maintain that record. It is essential as well to add greater emphasis and support to client access. This means both broadly replicating proven methods as well as integrating new technologies to improve and speed up program access. Resources could support innovative efforts to improve services to eligible individuals and families. For example, if more federal grants were available to local nonprofit groups to help them maintain and expand program outreach, more eligible families would receive SNAP benefits and ultimately be protected from experiencing hunger.

Programs that support work, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit, also play a crucial role in helping people transition out of poverty. While progress has been made to expand some work supports, not enough is being done to address health insurance, child care and housing disparities:

- Only 6 percent of poor people are able to purchase private health insurance outside the workplace, leaving more than 34 million men, women and children uninsured.
- Only one of every seven eligible children in low-income, working families receives a child care subsidy.
- Twenty-eight percent of eligible low-income renters receive federal rental assistance, and 68 percent of poor renters spend 50 percent or more of their income on housing.

When working-poor families have to spend inordinate amounts of their limited incomes on health care, housing or child care expenses, they have even less money to spend on food.



As a basic human right, all people should be able to purchase the food they need. Moving toward a future where everyone enjoys that right is a realistic, affordable and morally compelling goal for the United States. By using the values and energies that have made this nation great to strengthen the federal nutrition programs and pursue poverty reduction, we can make dramatic progress against hunger. The President and Congress assume this primary responsibility. Just as national defense is a federal responsibility, so too is the assurance of adequate food for Americans.

- Expand access to child nutrition programs so that more eligible children benefit.
- Strengthen federal commodity food programs.
- Provide the WIC program with sufficient funds so all eligible people participate.
- Ensure that program benefits and eligibility rules keep pace with inflation.
- Invest in public education to increase outreach and awareness of the importance of preventing hunger and improving nutrition for health, learning and productivity.

We know how to end hunger. Other advanced industrialized nations already have done so. While the systemic issues contributing to poverty are equally as important to address, this report focuses on how we can end hunger in America. Now is the time to act. We must work together to muster the political will that will move words into reality. Once accomplished, we must meet the greater challenge of maintaining that will until we create an America where all men, women and children are free from hunger.

Following is a summary of the steps we can take today to bring about a hunger-free America.

1. FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- Renew the commitment made by the World Food Summit in 1996 to cut hunger and food insecurity in half by a date within reach; set this goal for 2015, and end childhood hunger in the U.S. by that date.
- Invest in and strengthen the national nutrition safety net.
- Ensure that states, localities and schools offer all federal food assistance programs and work actively to enroll eligible people in these programs.
- Base monthly SNAP benefits on a realistic measure of what poor households need to buy food for an adequate diet.
- Extend SNAP eligibility to more struggling low income people.



2. STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- Strengthen local use of federal nutrition programs.
- Adopt policies that would expand eligibility and promote participation in SNAP.
- Reduce the complexity and stigma of applying for SNAP.
- Work with school districts and localities to ensure that they offer the full range of child nutrition programs.
- Expand program outreach for benefits and services, especially to underserved populations, such as working-poor households, eligible immigrants and seniors.
- Provide incentives for grocery stores, corner stores and farmers markets to provide healthy food options in under-served communities.
- Invest in public education to increase outreach and awareness of the importance of preventing hunger and improving nutrition for health, learning and productivity.

3. SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

- Provide eligible children the full range of federal nutrition assistance programs, including free and reduced-price breakfast and lunch, after-school snacks and supper, summer meals programs and the child and adult care meals program.
- Ensure that all eligible children who wish to participate are enrolled in the school meal and child nutrition programs.
- Invest in public education to increase outreach and awareness of the importance of preventing hunger and improving nutrition for health, learning and productivity.

4. NONPROFIT GROUPS

- Work to increase public awareness of the problem of hunger in the community and advocate for policies to end hunger.
- Ensure that state and local governments take advantage of all federal nutrition assistance programs.
- Strengthen charitable distribution network and faith-based agencies.
- Educate low-income people about their potential eligibility for nutrition assistance and help connect them with the appropriate programs.
- Monitor program performance in SNAP offices, schools and communities.
- Ensure that, once families are connected with food assistance, they also have access to affordable nutritious food.
- Continue to acquire and distribute balanced and nutritious food.

5. LABOR AND INDUSTRY

- Collaborate with government and community groups to connect low-wage workers to federal nutrition programs.
- Contribute time, money, food, warehouse space and/or transportation capacity to local anti-hunger organizations.

- Support workplace giving campaigns that target hunger.
- Advocate for improved public policies to end hunger.

6. INDIVIDUALS

- Urge elected officials to do more to reduce hunger by improving and expanding federal nutrition programs.
- Become involved with local anti-hunger organizations by advocating and donating time, money or food.
- Raise local awareness of hunger by talking to friends and family, and working in your local community.

As we make progress toward ending hunger, it will be important to reassess these policy recommendations to make sure they continue to represent the most effective approach. The level of investment needed here will rise or fall depending on economic conditions and advances (or setbacks) in areas such as employment, work supports and overall poverty reduction.



THE BLUEPRINT: FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The federal food assistance programs serve as the primary instrument for addressing hunger in the United States and must continue as the cornerstone of our nation's anti-hunger strategy. These programs protect millions of low-income people and families from hunger by providing them with resources to buy the food they need, direct meal service and/or supplementary food.

To end hunger, however, more must be done to ensure that the programs offer sufficient help and reach all eligible people.

- LIVE UP TO THE COMMITMENT TO ELIMINATE HUNGER AND FOOD INSECURITY

The United States produces more than enough food for every American. For a variety of reasons, though, we have been unable to eliminate hunger in our country. The main problem has been the lack of political will. We must believe, we must commit, and we must demand that this problem be solved.

As part of its Healthy People 2010 Initiative in concert with the World Food Summit of 1996, the United States pledged to cut food insecurity in half by 2010 and eliminate it by 2015. While some progress was made toward this goal in the late 1990s, we have lost ground since 2000. We can do better than that. We need to renew and strengthen the nation's commitment to the goal of ending hunger and to do by taking appropriate actions. We believe that the United States can cut hunger and food insecurity in half by 2015, and eliminate hunger among children by that date.

- ENSURE THAT STATES, LOCALITIES AND SCHOOLS OFFER ALL FEDERAL FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AND WORK ACTIVELY TO ENROLL ELIGIBLE PEOPLE IN THESE PROGRAMS.

The federal food assistance programs do a remarkable job of addressing the food needs of people who participate, but unfortunately many hungry people who are eligible do not participate. There are two main reasons contributing to this situation. First, not every locality offers the full range of food assistance programs. For example, many localities do not offer free summer meals or school breakfasts to poor children. Second, some eligible people do not participate in the programs because they: do not know they are eligible; believe the benefit levels will not provide significant help; or have found it too difficult to apply. For example, about 33% of people eligible for SNAP are not enrolled in the program.

The federal government needs to redouble its efforts to ensure that federal food assistance programs reach all eligible people who wish to participate. This will involve conducting public media campaigns; assisting the outreach efforts of nonprofit groups, states and localities; providing technical assistance to communities that need help setting up new programs; and establishing participation targets toward meeting the goal of ending hunger by a target date within reach and holding program operators accountable for meeting those targets.

Such an undertaking will require resources. Many states and localities are cutting administrative funding for the nutrition programs due to budget shortfalls, despite growing need (and despite the demonstrated economic stimulus that SNAP expenditures bring to state and local economies). The federal government will need to support adequate administrative operations for states, as well as innovative efforts to improve services to eligible individuals and families. For example, if more federal grants were available to local nonprofit groups to help them maintain and expand program outreach, more eligible families would receive SNAP benefits and ultimately be protected from experiencing hunger.

The government also needs to pay particular attention to better understanding why certain populations, especially low-income older Americans, have low participation rates in the food assistance programs. Research should be undertaken to determine which programs would best address the needs of these groups and whether changes to the programs or their benefit delivery systems would result in more eligible people participating.

- BASE MONTHLY SNAP BENEFITS ON A REALISTIC MEASURE OF WHAT POOR HOUSEHOLDS NEED TO BUY FOOD FOR AN ADEQUATE DIET.

SNAP is the nation's first line of defense against hunger. Each month it provides more than 12 million households living under 130% of the poverty line with benefits on EBT (debit) cards that enable them to buy nutritious food. One step forward made in the 2008 Farm Bill was the renaming of the Food Stamp Program to SNAP. This change was long overdue and reflects the fact that the program is now administered electronically, not through a paper system as it was originally.

SNAP benefits need to be strengthened. Currently, benefit levels are based on the Thrifty Food Plan, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) estimate of what it would cost for a hypothetical family of four



(two parents and two elementary school children with no special needs) to purchase a month's worth of food, representing a minimally adequate diet. Even when the plan was first developed during the Depression, the federal government described it as inadequate for long-term consumption. Studies since have shown that these initial food cost assumptions are incorrect for most low-income people. Thus, the Thrifty Food Plan – and the corresponding SNAP benefits offered – is not enough to supply an adequate diet.

The maximum monthly SNAP benefit in fiscal year 2009 for a family of four is \$588 or \$1.63 per person per meal. Most participants do not receive the maximum benefit because the program assumes that households can contribute one-third of their income toward food purchases. In reality, many families cannot afford to contribute that much of their income. The average daily per-person benefit is expected to be only about \$4 per person, and some households only receive the minimum monthly benefit of \$14.

Moreover, because SNAP benefits are adjusted for inflation based on lagged data and because the adjustment is made only once per year, SNAP benefits lose value throughout the year, actually falling behind the cost of the Thrifty Food Plan. For example, the maximum benefit for a family of four in 2008 with no other income available for food purchases was \$542 a month, as set in October 2007. Participants did not see an inflation adjustment of their benefits until October 2008, even though the monthly cost of the Thrifty Food Plan, on which their benefits are based,

already stood at \$598.70 in July 2008 —a \$57 shortfall. The shortfall between SNAP benefits and the Thrifty Food Plan is especially harsh in years with high food inflation.

SNAP benefit levels should be based on a food plan that more accurately reflects what it costs to feed a family. In addition, the benefit formula should be revised to allow families to set aside more of their income for rent, utilities and health costs, which have risen significantly since the program was established. The 2008 Farm Bill made a significant improvement by ensuring that all aspects of the benefit structure fully account for inflation for the first time since the program's creation, but more can be done.

- ALLOW LOW-INCOME FAMILIES TO PARTICIPATE IN SNAP WITHOUT FORFEITING THE OPPORTUNITY TO SAVE.

Even modest financial assets can prevent low-income families from falling into debt and poverty if a financial emergency, such as a spell of unemployment or a major car repair, arises. Unfortunately, SNAP is not available to individuals who have even minimal savings. Currently, under federal rules a household may not participate in SNAP if it has more than \$2,000 in savings or other assets (\$3,000 for households with elderly or disabled members). SNAP's restrictive asset limit helps trap families in poverty and closes off some of the most viable avenues to self-sufficiency and generational progress. Changes made in the 2008 Farm Bill exclude education and retirement savings accounts as counted assets and ensure that the asset

limits will rise with inflation. But, we must go further by lifting the asset limits.

• EXTEND SNAP ELIGIBILITY TO MORE STRUGGLING LOW-INCOME PEOPLE.

Many low-income people are working two or more jobs, yet are unable to meet their food needs without resorting to charitable food outlets. Some have incomes just above current program eligibility limits. Others have been made ineligible by Congress, undermining the program's role as a universal food assistance program. Closing gaps in coverage for those in need is vital if we are to reduce hunger. For example:

- The 1996 welfare law made most immigrants, including those legally residing in the United States, ineligible for SNAP benefits. While some legal immigrants have regained eligibility, many others have not, and many legal immigrants remain confused about whether they are eligible for benefits or would face penalties for applying. As the use of SNAP benefits by legal immigrant families has dropped, hunger in these families has risen, especially among children, including citizen children of immigrant parents. In America, one in four poor children, living under 200% of poverty, has an immigrant parent. It is essential that they receive the full protection of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Hardworking families with a legal immigrant should not go hungry. Legal immigrants should be made eligible for SNAP benefits on the same basis as citizens.
- The 1996 welfare law also imposed a severe food stamp time limit on many unemployed people without children: These people may not receive benefits for more than three months in any three-year period, even if no jobs are available. Federal law should remove this arbitrary time limit for jobless workers who are unable to find work.

• EXPAND ACCESS TO CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS SO THAT MORE ELIGIBLE CHILDREN CAN BENEFIT.

The national school lunch and breakfast programs, which provide free or reduced-price meals to children whose families have incomes at or below 185% of the poverty line, represent the nation's principal nutrition support for children at risk of hunger. These programs supply low-income children one-third to one-half of the nutrition they need each school day for healthy growth and development.

However, many low-income children who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals do not receive them. Federal rules should be changed to better enable low-income children who participate in other means-tested programs, such as Medicaid, to be enrolled automatically in school meal programs. This would improve access for eligible low-income children and reduce paperwork for already overburdened schools.

In addition, federal requirements should be changed to help schools offer the breakfast program to more children. The breakfast program serves more than 8 million low-income children daily, but could serve many more if every school that offers free or reduced-price lunches also offered free or reduced-price breakfasts. Only 83 percent of schools with a School Lunch Program operate a breakfast program. The federal government also should strongly encourage schools that already offer the breakfast program to offer meals in ways that make it easier for children to eat at school. Serving breakfast in the classroom is one key way to increase participation in the School Breakfast Program, especially among older children.

Other federal nutrition programs should be strengthened as well. The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides a reimbursement for nutritious meals served to children in school and nonschool settings, such as Head Start, child care centers, family child care homes and after-school programs. Increasingly, CACFP is being used to subsidize meals in Kids Cafe programs and Boys & Girls Club settings, but the program remains under-used, especially in family child care and after-school settings. Federal policy should be changed to broaden eligibility to encourage more child care providers and youth programs to offer CACFP meals and snacks, and to provide evening meals to children who remain in child care longer.

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides federal reimbursements for meals provided to children in low-income neighborhoods when school is out for the summer. Because regular year school meals aren't available, both child hunger rates and obesity risks spike in the summer. SFSP is typically operated by school districts, county or municipal governments, summer camps, community centers, Kids Cafes, and other nonprofit groups. Yet despite the obvious need for a breakfast and lunch program in the summer, only about 2.85 million children receive meals during the summer through the SFSP or the school lunch program, as compared to the 18 million low-income children who receive free or reduced-price meals daily during the school year. Barriers to the program include: too-narrow eligibility criteria; challenges in



administering the program; lack of awareness of the federal program among children and local providers; lack of support for summer programs that could serve food; low participation among summer activity programs in operation; and inadequate reimbursement rates. Federal policy should be changed to make the Summer Food Service Program more accessible through schools, other public agencies and non-profits to ensure that all children living in urban, suburban and rural America have access to nutrition in the summer.

- **STRENGTHEN FEDERAL COMMODITY FOOD PROGRAMS.**

All families and people should be able to purchase the food they need, which would mean that food banks, food pantries and soup kitchens would not be needed to feed families, except for emergencies. Until we reach that goal, these organizations and the federal commodity programs that support them will continue to play a critical role in responding to families' needs, particularly in emergency situations.

Consistent with the Blueprint proposals, food banks and other emergency food providers should continue to expand their role in helping people access SNAP benefits, child nutrition programs and other nutrition programs and services. In the short-term, governments should do more to ensure a strong emergency food response.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) provides federal commodities and funds to states for emergency food assistance distribution. In most instances, TEFAP commodities are provided to nonprofit charitable organizations, such as food banks, which distribute them (along with privately donated food) to hungry people through local charitable agencies including food pantries, soup kitchens and emergency shelters.

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), like TEFAP, provides federal commodities to 32 states and the District of Columbia for distribution to two low-income groups: (1) pregnant and postpartum women, infants and children up to age 6; and (2) seniors. The latter group makes up more than 90% of CSFP recipients, and the need among this age group is likely to accelerate as the baby-boom generation retires. CSFP also needs additional funding so it can reach more eligible older Americans.

- **PROVIDE THE WIC PROGRAM WITH SUFFICIENT FUNDING TO ENABLE ALL ELIGIBLE PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE.**

WIC, which provides a science based food package and nutrition education to low-income, at-risk pregnant and postpartum women, infants and children up to age 5, has often been described as one of the most effective federal anti-poverty programs. Research shows that participation in WIC improves birth outcomes and children's diets. According to a General Accounting Office review of the research conducted on WIC, every \$1 provided in federal WIC

benefits to pregnant women saves approximately \$3 in Medicaid and other health care costs.

The WIC program has had remarkable success in reaching eligible families, especially those with infants. The federal government needs to continue to provide sufficient funding so that all eligible applicants are served by this crucial program. Ongoing resources also are needed to support policies that enhance the program's nutrition outcomes, such as promoting breastfeeding and allowing WIC participants to use their vouchers at local farmers' markets.

- **INVEST IN PUBLIC EDUCATION TO INCREASE OUTREACH AND AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF PREVENTING HUNGER AND IMPROVING NUTRITION FOR HEALTH, LEARNING AND PRODUCTIVITY.**

The federal government invests resources each year to survey and study the issue of hunger in our country. This money is well spent, but more needs to be done. Just as the government works to improve public understanding of other public health problems and their consequences for society, it must undertake a major public campaign on the problem of hunger. Such a public discussion needs to include both the causes and costs of hunger. Finally, the federal government needs to promote low-income Americans' access to healthy food in their neighborhoods.



THE BLUEPRINT: STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

MAKING HUNGER A PRIORITY

While America's nutrition safety net is established by the federal government, it is administered largely by the states and local agencies. An important step on the road to a food secure America is a commitment by the leaders of state and local governments to a sustained and focused effort to end hunger by drawing attention to the scope, causes and solutions; raising awareness; and expanding the engagement of a state's public and private sectors.

Some of the most promising initiatives that can be undertaken to connect eligible people to federal food assistance programs occur at these government levels. A number of states have already taken important steps to better understand their hunger problem and develop policy solutions.

- In 1991, Montana's state legislature created the Montana State Advisory Council on Food and Nutrition, through which representatives from public and private sector anti-hunger programs study the state's hunger and nutrition problems and provide information, education and recommendations to policy makers, service providers and the public. The council has helped legislators choose which federal nutrition programs to implement, worked to improve coordination between programs at the state and local level, and recognized local service providers with annual awards for innovative and effective efforts to address hunger.
- Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski made a public commitment to respond to the problem of hunger in his state and has hosted two statewide summits to discuss the problem of and possible solutions to hunger in Oregon. Working with anti-hunger and anti-poverty advocates, he has outlined an ambitious 40-point plan for ending hunger that focuses on its root causes: high unemployment, low-paying jobs, high rents and social isolation. These efforts have raised the visibility of the problem in the state and laid the groundwork for ending hunger in Oregon.

- In 2008, Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick, Boston Mayor Thomas Menino and U.S. Representative Jim McGovern convened a statewide hunger summit where government, non-profit, and private sector stakeholders strategized about ways to address hunger in the Commonwealth. In July 2008, noting that the changes had initiated during a brainstorming session at the March 2008 summit, the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance announced implementation of policies to connect more needy people with food stamp benefits.

- For 2009, an interfaith effort to write a local blueprint to end hunger in Los Angeles County is being planned. (Los Angeles has a population greater than 42 states of the United States) This blueprint will declare "Los Angeles County a Hunger-Free Zone by 2015". The hope is to align county (and the 88 cities in the county) services to better coordinate a frontal, pro-active strategy to combat hunger. We see a ground swell of people working at the grass-roots level seeking local solutions and empowerment.

Following are recommendations on policies and outreach activities that state and local governments can support to help more eligible people access adequate food.

- **BUILDING RESOURCES TO SUPPORT HUNGER RELIEF AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVEL**
It is important for elected officials at the state and local level to build a strong infrastructure within their administrative structure to ensure high visibility and focus on the issue of hunger. Governors, state legislators, mayors and other elected officials should:
 - Appoint cabinet-level advisors to oversee and coordinate their state and local governments' efforts to end hunger and food insecurity, coordinate the work of state and local departments and agencies, and enlist the active engagement of other public and private sector leaders.



- Include anti-hunger policies and appropriations as priorities on their federal legislative agenda and in its engagement with national inter-governmental associations.
- Mandate the development and release of an annual comprehensive report on hunger and food insecurity to describe, quantify, and assess the state government's efforts and track progress toward the Blueprint goals.
- Require all state and local departments to “cross-market” low-income support programs in all communications with potentially eligible populations; and coordinate anti-hunger programs to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.
- **ADOPT POLICIES THAT WOULD EXPAND ELIGIBILITY AND PROMOTE PARTICIPATION IN THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.**
States now have significant flexibility to change their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in ways that enable more low-income households to receive food assistance. They can automatically provide five months of transitional SNAP benefits to families leaving welfare, without any extra paperwork, thereby ensuring that SNAP helps working families. States also now have the option to adopt a less restrictive asset test in SNAP, ensuring that households do not have to deplete their savings in order to receive food

assistance. More states need to adopt these options to expand program coverage to more low-income people at risk of hunger.

- **REDUCE THE COMPLEXITY AND STIGMA OF APPLYING FOR SNAP.**

The best way to encourage more eligible people to participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is to make it easier for them to apply for and retain benefits.

Encouraging progress has been made to streamline and simplify application forms and processes. Some state SNAP offices now provide extended office hours and a range of services online, including accessing applications. Many states routinely conduct eligibility interviews over the phone.

This progress needs to continue. For example, states should be encouraged to accept SNAP applications at more locations, especially coordinating with their health program outreach initiatives, and make sure that all SNAP offices are accessible by public transportation (or provide transportation vouchers). States also should invest in staffing and training to provide good customer service and eliminate counterproductive practices, such as fingerprinting or conducting unwarranted and intrusive family investigations.

- **WORK WITH SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND LOCALITIES TO ENSURE THAT CHILDREN HAVE ACCESS TO NUTRITIOUS MEALS ON A CONSISTENT AND RELIABLE BASIS**

Children cannot concentrate when they are hungry. Research has conclusively demonstrated that good nutrition can promote cognitive development and learning, and that education, in turn, can help break the inter-generational cycle of poverty and dependence on public assistance. If we truly desire a self-sufficient population, we must facilitate learning by feeding our children nutritious meals on a consistent and reliable basis.

Schools and communities should be given the assistance necessary to offer the full range of child nutrition programs. They should then be held accountable for meeting the nutritional needs of the children in their care.

One way to make sure that school nutrition programs reach eligible children is to simplify the application process. For example, states are required to enroll children whose families receive SNAP benefits in the free school meals program. States should take steps to ensure that 100% of these children are connected to school meals, improving their food security and eliminating redundant application processes.

- EXPAND NUTRITION PROGRAM OUTREACH, ESPECIALLY TO UNDER-SERVED POPULATIONS, SUCH AS WORKING-POOR HOUSEHOLDS, ELIGIBLE IMMIGRANTS, CHILDREN AND THE ELDERLY.

Many people who are eligible for SNAP or child nutrition programs do not know they are eligible or think they are only eligible for very low benefits. Public education campaigns are crucial to addressing these misconceptions.

Because of their regular interaction with the public, state and local governments have numerous opportunities to communicate with the intended recipients of federal nutrition programs, as well as potential program sponsors and others whose support is vital to these programs' success. State and local governments can conduct outreach and education in places where eligible people shop, work, transact other business and/or learn, including retail food stores, Social Security offices, elderly congregate meal settings and schools.

States also can partner with community-based groups to expand their existing outreach activities to include the federal nutrition programs. People who run nonprofit programs are trusted by clients and may be the most effective at educating people about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Many states and local governments have active campaigns for the Earned Income Tax Credit,

government sponsored health insurance, or the new federal prescription drug benefit. The target populations for these outreach efforts overlap considerably with the populations who are eligible but do not participate in the federal nutrition programs. Expanding the scope and combining existing outreach activities would be an efficient mechanism for connecting eligible people with food assistance.

- SUPPORT ACCESS TO NUTRITION

State and local governments also can promote SNAP transactions at farmers' markets via Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT), promote availability of healthy foods at corner stores, and encourage supermarkets to open stores in neighborhoods that face food desert conditions.

- INVEST IN PUBLIC EDUCATION TO INCREASE OUTREACH AND AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF PREVENTING HUNGER AND IMPROVING NUTRITION FOR HEALTH, LEARNING AND PRODUCTIVITY.

Like the federal government, state and local governments need to do more to raise awareness of hunger as a public health problem, and support local efforts to understand and respond to it. One way to raise awareness is to conduct a media campaign. Governments also can work with state and local anti-hunger and anti-poverty coalitions to gain a better understanding of hunger in local communities.



THE BLUEPRINT: SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

There is no better way to reach children and their parents than through schools and community organizations. Families' lives often revolve around their children's school and extracurricular activities. Schools also have a large responsibility for assuring children's intellectual and physical development, both of which require proper nutrition.

- PROVIDE ELIGIBLE CHILDREN THE FULL RANGE OF FEDERAL FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS, INCLUDING FREE AND REDUCED-PRICE BREAKFAST AND LUNCH, AFTER-SCHOOL SNACKS AND SUPPER, THE SUMMER MEALS PROGRAM, AND THE CHILD AND ADULT CARE MEALS PROGRAM.

Schools and community programs have enormous influence over the quality of children's nutrition via the food they serve and sell. It is crucial that low-income children have as many opportunities to receive nutritious food as possible. Not only do children at risk of hunger spend much of their time in school and community programs, but their food options outside these settings are likely to be more limited and less nutritious.

- ENSURE THAT ALL ELIGIBLE CHILDREN WHO WISH TO PARTICIPATE ARE ENROLLED IN THE SCHOOL MEAL AND CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS.

Daily meals and snacks are part of every child's school experience and many community activities. Children at risk of hunger not only need free or reduced-price lunches, but also free or reduced-price breakfasts, after-school snacks and even dinners. Many children arrive at school without having eaten breakfast, and more children than ever are in after-school programs

that stretch into the traditional dinner hour as their parents work longer hours and commute longer distances. Schools need to offer the full range of food programs and take aggressive steps to enroll all eligible children.

- INVEST IN PUBLIC EDUCATION TO INCREASE OUTREACH AND AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF PREVENTING HUNGER AND IMPROVING NUTRITION FOR HEALTH, LEARNING AND PRODUCTIVITY.

The best approach to nutrition education begins early in childhood and teaches through experience. In addition to making nutritious food available to low-income children, schools can offer nutrition education that promotes healthy food choices while also raising awareness of the problem of poverty and hunger in local communities.

This education effort should not end with children. Schools also can work with parents and the local community to increase understanding of hunger and its affect on children's ability to learn. Together, they can collaborate to find ways to take advantage of the federal resources available to the community.

THE BLUEPRINT: NONPROFIT GROUPS

Nonprofit groups have a major role to play in ending hunger. While the federal nutrition programs are and should be the primary source of food assistance for Americans at risk of hunger, nonprofits can build public awareness and commitment through effective advocacy. They can also help drive program accountability and improvement as well as deliver services that supplement and enhance our nation's response to hunger.

Hunger affects an individual, then a family, and ultimately a community. Hunger can best be seen and understood where it is experienced. That is why many of the best approaches to addressing hunger arise from local communities. For example, some nonprofits have set up hot lines to help hungry families locate services and food assistance programs. There is also a National Hunger Hotline at 1-866-3-HUNGRY.

On a state and national level, nonprofit groups advocate for the use of government resources in ways that are equitable and effective in meeting the stated purpose of food assistance and related programs. Ending hunger will require even greater involvement from nonprofit groups in advocacy. Meanwhile, emergency food assistance will continue to be needed for local and individual crises, as well as for more widespread hunger problems as we transition to a hunger-free America. Following are ways that the nonprofit community can further contribute to ending hunger.

- WORK TO INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM OF HUNGER IN THE COMMUNITY AND ADVOCATE FOR POLICIES THAT WILL END HUNGER.

Whether or not they have a specific anti-hunger focus, nonprofits and charities are some of the strongest voices that can raise public understanding of the problem of hunger: They conduct analyses and promote education about hunger in their communities; they advocate for policies that respond to hunger's root causes, such as stronger work supports; they work to ensure full use of government programs and

improvements at the local level; they collaborate with government, labor and industry to develop innovative local strategies for connecting eligible people with food assistance programs; and they must continue and further improve these efforts. As we saw in Oregon, the greater the public awareness about the state's hunger problem, the more engaged the public became and the more they held their local, state, and federal representatives accountable.

- ENSURE THAT STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ALL FEDERAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS. Government agencies that administer nutrition assistance programs often are hampered by inadequate resources, coupled with complex regulations governing multiple programs. Nonprofit groups can help bring a focus to the issue of hunger and the need for adequate public investments in program administration and infrastructure. Agencies are likely to welcome collaborative efforts with nonprofit groups that can help to increase the reach of nutrition programs.

- STRENGTHEN THE CHARITABLE DISTRIBUTION NETWORK AND FAITH-BASED AGENCIES While we recognize expansion of the charitable emergency food system cannot bring an end to hunger, hungry Americans need emergency food assistance. Until all citizens can acquire sufficient quantities of nutritious food, and it will take some time to get there, food pantries, soup kitchens and other programs that provide food to people facing hunger will continue to be needed. Ultimately, emergency feeding should become just that: food for emergency situations.

If we are to meet the emergency needs of people in our community challenged by hunger, the charitable food distribution network must have access to the assistance, support, and resources needed to get more food to more people more often. Food banks, food pantries, and other private sector providers must continue to: develop the capacity to serve hungry

people including critical infrastructure needs; identify new sources of food; respond to gaps in services and new areas of need; and collaborate with other public and private organizations to meet people's needs. Faith-based agencies are a critical component to providing emergency food assistance, as they operate the majority of soup kitchens and food pantries in the United States.

- EDUCATE LOW-INCOME PEOPLE ABOUT THEIR POTENTIAL ELIGIBILITY FOR NUTRITION ASSISTANCE AND HELP CONNECT THEM WITH THE APPROPRIATE PROGRAMS.

Some eligible people do not participate in federal nutrition programs because they find that the time and out-of-pocket costs to enroll and remain in programs are too high. There are many ways to increase program benefits and reduce cost. These are discussed elsewhere in this document.

Other people simply do not know they are eligible for benefits. Relatively small investments in outreach can pay large dividends. For example, many nonprofit groups around the country take advantage of their own or government-provided computer screening tools to help families determine whether they are eligible for federal food assistance. Groups that help low-income households apply for health coverage could expand their efforts to also help with food assistance applications.

- MONITOR PROGRAM PERFORMANCE IN SNAP OFFICES, SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES.

Nonprofit groups can serve an essential role in making sure that nutrition programs are reaching the people who need them and accomplishing the stated objectives. SNAP offices, schools and communities vary tremendously in their effectiveness in implementing the nutrition programs. In most cases, others can readily replicate the best practices of high performers.

- ENSURE THAT, ONCE FAMILIES ARE CONNECTED WITH FOOD ASSISTANCE, THEY ALSO HAVE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE NUTRITIOUS FOOD.

Even when low-income families access programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program that boost their ability to purchase food, they can have difficulty finding affordable markets that carry a wide variety of healthy foods. Supermarkets are scarce in low-income rural and urban communities. Farmers' markets often are not equipped to handle the SNAP EBT transactions. Nutritious food, particularly produce, can be difficult to acquire for residents of these communities. Prices at existing supermarkets in poorer neighborhoods typically are higher than in middle-income communities. These factors can have a substantial impact on a family's budget and diet.

To address this situation, many nonprofit groups work in low-income communities to secure new food retail outlets, as well as more food choices through

community gardens, food co-ops, Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs), farmers' markets equipped to handle EBT, farm-to-school sales, and cooking education classes. Not only can these projects directly improve peoples' nutrition, they also bring other benefits to communities and forge alliances with new constituencies, such as farmers.

Once funded, a USDA and Institute of Medicine collaborative study on the occurrence and distribution of these "food deserts" will provide important information about the problem. The results of the study should be used by community groups to encourage local governments to help solve the problem in their area.



THE BLUEPRINT: LABOR AND INDUSTRY

more productive when they are not worrying about how they will feed their children. Children, in turn, grow into more productive workers when they are adequately fed. And, self-sufficient consumers can fully contribute to the nation's economy.

Unfortunately, Americans are increasingly finding that a job does not ensure the ability to provide for oneself or one's family. Even though the official definition of poverty in America is quite sparing, millions of workers and their families still fall below that threshold each year.

This Blueprint focuses on strengthening programs and initiatives that address immediate hunger. But, as noted earlier, people facing food insecurity and hunger often times are also experiencing low wages and a lack of or inadequate health benefits that do not allow them to provide the basic needs for themselves and their families. Following are ways the business and labor industry can contribute to ending hunger.

- **COLLABORATE WITH GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY GROUPS TO CONNECT LOW-WAGE WORKERS TO FEDERAL NUTRITION PROGRAMS.** Companies have a stake in promoting the stability of their work force and economic health of their communities. They can do so not only directly, through the compensation and benefits they offer their workers, but also by helping their workers and others in the community learn about and use federal programs for which they are eligible. Every \$1 in federally funded SNAP benefits generates nearly twice that in local economic activity.

Some businesses already make it a practice to facilitate their employees' enrollment into the Earned Income Tax Credit and government-sponsored health insurance. Some retail stores even provide such benefit information to their consumers. Efforts to include information about the federal nutrition programs are underway in some places and should be expanded.

Companies can work with the entities that administer these programs to match eligible employees with programs. For example, a state SNAP agency could

make an eligibility screening tool available to a company's human resources department, which then could help workers understand the level of support for which they might be eligible. Employees benefit from improved food security, and employers benefit from higher employee retention.

- **CONTRIBUTE TIME, MONEY, FOOD, WAREHOUSE SPACE AND/OR TRANSPORTATION TO LOCAL ANTI-HUNGER ORGANIZATIONS.** Many food companies and retail businesses already contribute to hunger relief by donating food. More businesses need to join this effort.

In addition, they can provide warehouse space, assist with transportation and share their insights and expertise in these areas. The nation's charitable infrastructure could be dramatically improved with increased support from the business community, particularly through the sharing of cutting edge industry best practices such as warehouse management, transportation and supply chain logistics.

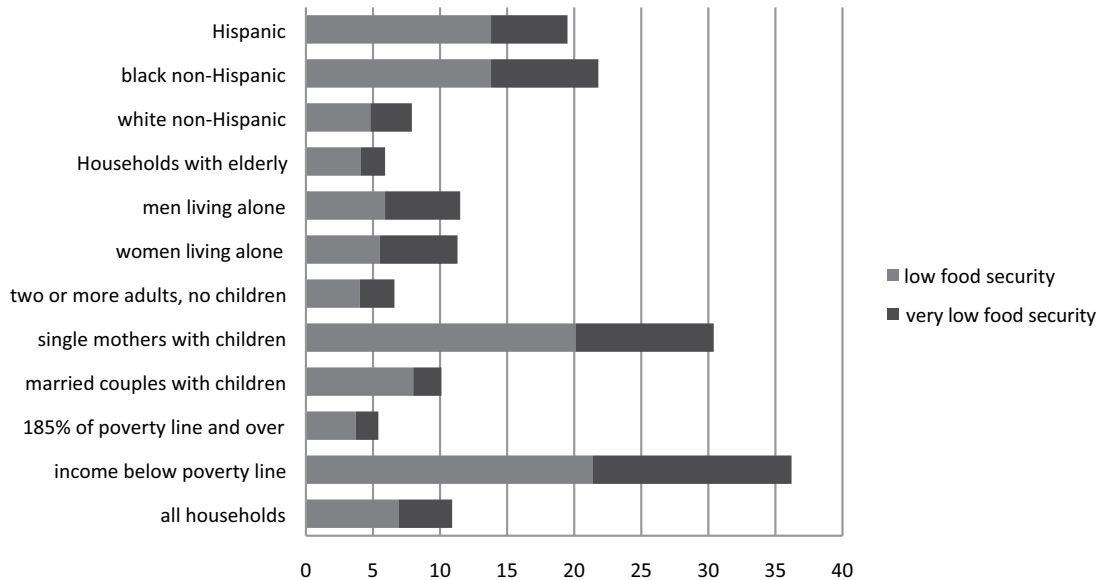
- **SUPPORT WORKPLACE GIVING CAMPAIGNS THAT TARGET HUNGER.** Ending hunger is an excellent focus for business giving campaigns. Hunger is a widely supported, nonpartisan issue that affects the entire nation and local communities at the same time. It also can be combined with broader charitable contexts, such as a campaign that responds to child poverty. In addition to helping feed hungry people, funds raised can enhance advocacy and awareness efforts that will make ending hunger a reality.

- **ADVOCATE FOR IMPROVED PUBLIC POLICIES TO END HUNGER.** Business and labor organizations and their members can be effective advocates for government policies and public awareness on ending hunger. A simple step would be joining a local coalition that is working to raise awareness of the hunger problem, and advocating for policies that respond to hunger.

As individuals, we can join the campaign to end

THE BLUEPRINT: INDIVIDUALS

Who Is Food Insecure? (Percent of Households)



hunger in many different ways. We can participate through government, as voters and taxpayers. We can participate through business, as consumers, shareholders and employees. We can participate through nonprofit and faith-based organizations, as members, donors and volunteers. But we also can participate as individuals, by exercising our political rights and responsibilities.

Ultimately, the nation’s political will to end hunger must build from each of us. Following are ways individuals can contribute to ending hunger.

- URGE ELECTED OFFICIALS TO DO MORE TO REDUCE HUNGER BY IMPROVING AND EXPANDING THE NATIONAL NUTRITION PROGRAMS.

We elect our legislators and we expect them to represent our priorities. They are, after all, spending public money. We have to let them know that ending hunger is one of those priorities and should receive the resources it needs. We can express this most directly in how we cast our votes. Recognizing that hunger is one of many issues about which Americans care, we must challenge candidates to articulate their positions and their plans for ending hunger.

- BECOME INVOLVED WITH LOCAL ANTI-HUNGER ORGANIZATIONS BY DONATING TIME, MONEY AND/OR FOOD.

Each year, well over a million Americans volunteer to help hungry people by working in food pantries, soup kitchens, food banks and countless other programs across the country. Increasingly, those volunteers are helping make federal programs more effective by engaging in activities like prescreening people for SNAP benefits and working to make sure that their

local community has sponsors for the Summer Food Service Program.

Individuals can continue to help in other ways, such as donating food, providing financial support, volunteering to help potentially eligible people find out how to connect with nutrition program benefits and services, and advocating with program administrators and elected officials for better nutrition program delivery.

- RAISE LOCAL AWARENESS OF HUNGER BY TALKING TO FRIENDS AND FAMILY, AND WORKING IN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY.

Millions of Americans feel strongly about the existence of hunger in the United States – and even more strongly about its existence in their community. However, the number of people who are unaware or do not believe that hunger exists is discouraging.

People can help correct this misconception by talking about hunger within their circle of family, friends and community organizations. Participating in visibility campaigns, like the Food Stamp Challenge where individuals try to live on the daily SNAP food budget, and discussing these experiences in the media and with acquaintances is important to educating more people about hunger. In many communities, coalitions of concerned citizens have joined together to address hunger locally. These groups provide a highly effective way to increase people’s awareness of the issue and encourage their participation in the fight against hunger. Such widespread public awareness and action can powerfully contribute to the goal of ending hunger.

- OBESITY AND HUNGER

THE BLUEPRINT: SPECIAL FOCUS

There is an appropriately growing concern in this nation about rising obesity rates among both children and adults, and their serious negative health and social consequences. Eliminating hunger means more than just filling bellies: it means assuring that people have the resources for adequate, balanced and healthy nutrition.

Interestingly, obesity, food insecurity and hunger are problems that can coexist in the same households and even in the same people. Food insecure families often adapt using such strategies as relying on less expensive, less nutritious, high-calorie foods to stave off the sensation of hunger. Thus, while widespread overweight and obesity must be addressed, so must the problems of hunger and food insecurity.

The prevention of both obesity and food insecurity requires regular access to affordable and nutritionally adequate food. Federal nutrition programs already play an important role in this area by providing nutrition foods on a regular basis. Research is beginning to show that the federal nutrition programs can help prevent obesity among food-insecure children. The expansion and improvement of national nutrition programs will can help reduce rates of both obesity and food insecurity in the United States.

For information on the links between hunger and obesity, see www.frac.org/html/hunger_in_the_us/hunger&obesity.htm For research, news updates and other information on strategies to reduce childhood obesity, see www.rwjf.org/childhoodobesity/index.jsp For an innovative food bank program to educate clients about healthy food, see the Choose Healthy Options model posted at www.pittsburghfoodbank.org/chop

• **OLDER AMERICANS' NUTRITIONAL NEEDS**
Hunger among older adults in the United States is a complex issue. Older Americans are a diverse and growing population that includes active, working or recently retired people able to shop and prepare food, as well as frail and often much older adults that depend on congregate, home-delivered and institutional-based meals. The number of older Americans is expected to increase significantly in the next few decades, doubling by 2030, as the baby

boomer generation ages into a senior demographic.

While seven of the top ten diseases in the U.S. are directly connected to nutritional status, older adults are often more vulnerable to these diseases, many of which are compounded by other risk factors, including living situation, income, race and mental health. For older adults, there are many barriers to eating healthy foods, including access and cost.

Access to nutritious and healthy food helps keep older adults independent, while also saving a significant amount of both private and government dollars. But not every older American has access to appropriate food and nutrition. Older adults living in "food deserts," where there are no nearby grocery stores, often must rely on neighborhood markets and convenience stores with limited selections.

Having adequate income is a primary precondition for food security for older adults, but 24% of older women and 14% of older men live below 135% of the federal poverty level. Overall, as many as 35% of older adults are estimated to be food insecure, and women over age 75 and minorities are most likely to live in poverty, often by themselves. Food insecurity can lead to a variety of nutrition-related issues and chronic diseases whose effects are often more severe in older adults, including malnutrition, physical impairments, diabetes, heart disease, depression, and overall poor health status. Since older adults are already susceptible to higher rates of chronic health conditions and nutrient-deficiency diseases, poor dietary intake as a result of food insecurity further increases the risk of malnutrition, underweight status, disability, hospitalization, and early mortality.

Providing older adults with assistance for their health care costs can help them avoid choosing between medicine and food. Social Security, Supplemental Security Income and retirement funds contribute toward seniors' well-being, but are often not enough.

Reducing hunger among older adults will require changes in a number of programs at all levels. Connecting eligible older adults with SNAP benefits and providing adequate allotments can help cut Though the U.S. government spends billions of

medicine and food. Social Security, Supplemental Security Income and retirement funds contribute toward seniors' well-being, but are often not enough.

Reducing hunger among older adults will require changes in a number of programs at all levels. Connecting eligible older adults with SNAP benefits and providing adequate allotments can help cut food insecurity among older adults. Expanding and increasing funding for Older Americans Act congregate and home-delivered meals programs, The Child and Adult Care Food Program, and The Commodity Supplemental Food Program could also help ensure older adults have access to healthy foods and adequate nutrition.

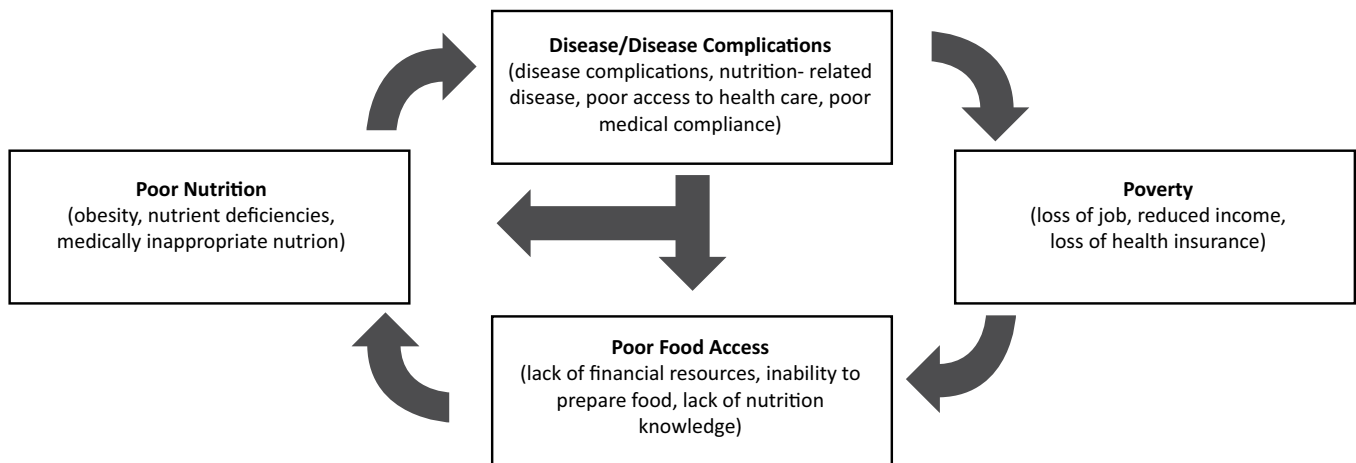
• **NUTRITION AND CHRONIC DISEASE**

Nutrition and medical experts agree that access to proper nutrition is absolutely critical for those suffering from chronic and life-threatening illnesses. As seen below, inadequate access to food and physical complications of disease help create a vicious cycle of poverty and poor health that impairs the well-being and productivity of millions of Americans. Because of the nature of this cycle, health and nutritional states continue to decline until an intervention occurs and takes one or more of these factors out of the equation.

Though the U.S. government spends billions of dollars every year treating late-stage disease through Medicaid, Medicare, and specialized programs such as the AIDS Drug Assistance Program, growing evidence indicates that some medical treatments are ineffective without adequate nutritional support,

while others could be avoided or minimized through proper nutrition. Furthermore, food security alone predicts the likelihood that one will receive timely and consistent medical care, a factor that reduces health care expenditures through early disease management. For more than two decades, providers of nutrition services have reported that when chronically ill people participate in specialized nutrition programs, their health improves, their compliance with medical treatments increases, and their food insecurity is reduced. As a result of fewer complications of disease, nutrition providers observe decreases in health care costs.

Even for those not experiencing disease-related poverty, disabling illness complicates every step of the nutrition process, from earning income, to shopping for food, to preparing and consuming meals. Serious disease can make a medically appropriate diet nearly impossible to attain by interfering with even one of these steps. With restricted food access, health worsens and long-term care may become necessary to satisfy the most basic nutritional needs. Government will need to consider new options to address the food needs of these populations.



THE BLUEPRINT: CONCLUSION

The responsibility to end hunger is a shared one. Food insecure and hungry people cannot end hunger alone. The same is true for people working low-wage jobs, the elderly, the disabled and children. We all are responsible for ending hunger, and if we are to solve this problem, we all must work together.

The first and most important step is to ensure that the programs we have established to address hunger are fully used and appropriately structured. For this to happen, we must understand that the government is not a separate entity or someone else, somewhere else. We are the government in America. We govern through the people we elect and the institutions and organizations we join. We govern through the letters we write, the contributions we make and the opinions we voice. We must exercise our power to hold our nation accountable for the hunger that exists in our midst.

Through our governments, our businesses, our unions, our schools, communities, houses of worship and nonprofit organizations, we can make the existing federal nutrition programs work as they are intended. We also can ensure that hungry people are reached whether they are old or young, urban or rural, working or unemployed. Moreover, we can advocate for economic policies that will create opportunity and reward all Americans who are working hard to achieve a better life for themselves and their families.

The solution to hunger in America is not a secret. We have both the knowledge and the tools. If we apply them with energy and fierce determination, we can end hunger in our country.

Let us make that commitment together. And together, as a nation, let us fulfill our commitment to end hunger in America.

THE BLUEPRINT: GLOSSARY

Nutritional Terms

FOOD INSECURITY - The limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods, including involuntarily cutting back on meals, food portions or not knowing the source of the next meal.

FOOD SECURITY - Access to enough food for an active, healthy life. At a minimum, food security includes: (1) the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and (2) an assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (e.g., without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging or other coping strategies).

HUNGER - The uneasy or painful sensation caused by a recurrent or involuntary lack of access to food. Many scientists consider hunger to be chronically inadequate nutritional intake due to low incomes (i.e., people do not have to experience pain to be hungry from a nutritional perspective).

MALNUTRITION - A serious health impairment that results from substandard nutrient intake. Malnutrition may result from a lack of food, a chronic shortage of key nutrients, or impaired absorption or metabolism associated with chronic conditions or disease.

OBESITY - An abnormal accumulation of body fat that may result in health impairments. Obesity is generally defined by the National Institutes of Health as having body weight that is more than 20% above the high range for ideal body weight.

UNDERNUTRITION - The consequence of consuming food that is inadequate in quantity and/or nutritional quality.

Food Program Terms

AFTERSCHOOL SNACK PROGRAM - The Afterschool Snack Program provides nutritious snacks and meals to low-income children participating in after-school educational or enrichment programs. It is run through both the National School Lunch Program and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM - The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides healthy meals and snacks in day care settings. The program primarily serves children but is also available in nonresidential adult day care centers for adults 60 years and older or those 18 years and older who are chronically impaired.

COMMODITY SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD PROGRAM – The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) provides monthly packages of USDA commodity foods to supply nutrients typically lacking in the diets of the target population. Low-income children up to age 6, pregnant and new mothers and seniors are eligible for the program. USDA provides food and administrative funds to states; local agencies distribute food to participants. The program currently operates in only 32 states. Five additional states are authorized to participate in the program but funding has not been made available.

COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE (CSAS) – Community Supported Agriculture consists of a community of individuals who pledge support to a farm operation so that the farmland becomes, either legally or spiritually, the community's farm, with the growers and consumers providing mutual support and sharing the risks and benefits of food production.

ELDERLY FOOD PROGRAMS – Federal nutrition programs that specifically target at-risk elderly people are administered by the Department of Health and Human Services through the Administration on Aging. Home-Delivered Nutrition Services, better known as Meals on Wheels, provides prepared meals to seniors in their own homes. Congregate Meal Programs provide meals to seniors in group settings like senior centers or community centers.

EMERGENCY FOOD PROGRAMS – Emergency food programs, typically run by private, nonprofit community organizations, distribute donated food items to hungry people at local shelters, soup kitchens and food pantries. Food for these programs is usually supplied by food banks.

FARMERS' MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAMS – USDA operates two nutrition programs aimed at getting fresh produce to target populations. The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) provides WIC participants with coupons for the purchase of fresh, nutritious locally grown fruits and vegetables at authorized farmers' markets and roadside stands. Similarly, the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) provides low-income seniors with coupons for the purchase of fresh produce.

FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLE PROGRAM – The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) provides fresh and dried fruits and fresh vegetables to students as snacks throughout the school day. After beginning as a pilot program, FFVP has expanded to operate in all states. FFVP targets elementary schools with a significant share of low-income children.

FOOD BANK – Food banks are regional charitable organizations that oversee the collection, storage and distribution of food and grocery products for delivery to agencies directly serving hungry people. Food banks inventory, store, and transport food in line with grocery industry and appropriate regulatory standards. In addition to individual and corporate donations, food banks may also receive federal administrative funding and commodity donations through The Emergency Food Assistance Program.

FOOD PANTRY – Food pantries are nonprofit organizations, typically small in size, operated by religious institutions or social service agencies. Pantries receive donated food items from food banks and other sources and distribute them directly to hungry people.

FOOD STAMP PROGRAM – See Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

SCHOOL LUNCH AND BREAKFAST PROGRAMS – The National School Lunch (SLP) and Breakfast Programs (SBP) are federally assisted meal programs operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. They provide nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free meals to children each school day.

SOUP KITCHEN – Soup kitchens are organizations whose primary purpose is to provide prepared meals to hungry people. Food served at soup kitchens is often obtained from food banks. Soup kitchens are generally staffed by volunteers and run by a church or community group.

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN (WIC) – WIC provides nutritious foods, as well as nutrition counseling and health care referrals, to low-income, nutritionally at-risk pregnant and nursing women, infants and children up to age 5. WIC participants receive monthly vouchers for the purchase of specific foods that are designed to supplement their diets with the nutrients important for healthy development.

SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM – The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides reimbursements to schools, local government agencies and community-based organizations for meals and snacks served to low-income children during the summer months and long school vacations. SFSP helps fill the gap for children who are eligible to receive reduced-price and free meals during the school year.

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM – The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formally the Food Stamp Program, serves as the first line of defense against hunger. The program is the cornerstone of the federal food assistance programs and provides crucial support to low-income households and those making the transition from welfare to work. SNAP provides low-income families with Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards that enable them to buy food items in authorized retail food stores. The program name on the national level is SNAP; the name may vary in states, as some choose to call it SNAP and others adopt more state-specific names.

THE EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM – Under The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), administrative funding and commodity foods are made available by the USDA to states. States provide the food to local agencies, usually food banks, which in turn distribute the food to soup kitchens and food pantries that directly serve the public.

THE MILLENNIUM DECLARATION TO END HUNGER IN AMERICA

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ANTI-HUNGER ORGANIZATIONS (NAHO)

WE CALL UPON OUR NATION'S LEADERS AND ALL PEOPLE TO JOIN TOGETHER TO END HUNGER IN AMERICA

America carries the wound of more than 35 million people – more than 12 million of them children – whose households cannot afford an adequate and balanced diet. Hunger should have no place at our table. It is inconsistent with our nation's commitment to human rights and objectionable to the American values of fairness, opportunity, family and community.

Our nation is committed to leaving no child behind, but children who are hungry cannot keep up. They cannot develop and thrive mentally and physically; they cannot learn or play with energy and enthusiasm. Hunger also impacts adult health – increasing sick time and diminishing productivity at work – and adds significant emotional stress as they struggle to provide for their family's most basic needs. Hunger stains the soul of America.

Many different points of view unite us in this declaration. Some of us work to end hunger because of deeply held religious beliefs. Others are motivated by hunger's impact on health and cognitive development. Still others are driven by the long-term economic, human and ethical costs of hunger. But all of us are moved by the recognition that America's moral authority in the world is undermined by so much hunger in our midst. Regardless of our religious beliefs or political commitments, we share the conviction that we as a nation must act to end hunger—now.

Ending hunger is a two-step process. We can make rapid progress to feed all who are hungry by expanding and improving effective initiatives like federal nutrition programs and strengthening community-based charitable efforts to fill the gaps in public nutrition programs. This combined effort has the capacity to feed all in need. But we need to go even further, by attacking the root causes of hunger.

Our nation's own experience, and the successes of other countries, demonstrate that this two-pronged strategy can work.

ENDING HUNGER

America made great progress in reducing hunger during the 1960s and 1970s, as the economy grew and the nation built strong public nutrition programs – food stamps, school lunches and breakfasts, summer food, Women Infants and Children (WIC) and elderly nutrition programs. These and other vital nutrition programs provide the fuel for children to develop and learn, and for adults to succeed at work and as parents.

As a country we did not sustain that momentum. One response has been the emergence of a strong private anti-hunger sector: food banks, pantries, soup kitchens, food rescue and other emergency feeding programs have become a key bulwark against hunger for many Americans. Volunteers, businesses, non-profits and religious organizations now help millions of needy Americans put food on the table.

But emergency feeding programs alone cannot feed all who are hungry. They cannot reach the scale necessary to address the desperate need many people face, nor can they provide long-term security for the families they serve. Our country's experience over the past 20 years shows that charity can fill gaps and ameliorate urgent needs. But charity cannot match the capacity of government to protect against hunger.

Ending hunger requires a sustained public commitment to improve federal nutrition programs, and to reduce red tape to reach every household and every individual in need:

- We can begin with the millions of at-risk children who start their school days without food, or who miss meals during the summer months when they lose access to regular year school meal programs. Expanding programs for school lunch, breakfast, summer food, afterschool meals for school age children, and childcare food and WIC for pre-schoolers is essential, cost-effective and a moral imperative.

- The Food Stamp Program, the cornerstone of the nation's hunger programs, has the capacity to wipe out hunger for millions of families. We should reduce the red tape that often keeps working families and others from getting essential food stamp help. We should end arbitrary eligibility excursions that keep out desperately needy people. And we should ensure that the help families get is enough so that they do not run out of food toward the end of each month.

- We also must better protect elderly citizens whose frail bodies and meager incomes make them susceptible to hunger and nutrition-related diseases. Improving food stamps, home delivered meals, congregate feeding programs and commodity donations will ensure that increasing age does not also mean an empty cupboard.

Access to these and related nutrition programs can be improved through the support of innovative community efforts across our country. And all programs can be strengthened to deliver adequate healthy, nutritious meals.

ENDING THE CAUSE OF HUNGER

The root cause of hunger is a lack of adequate purchasing power in millions of households. When individuals and families do not have the resources to buy enough food, hunger ensues. As a nation we must encourage work and also assure all who work that the results of their labor will be sufficient to provide for the basic needs of their families. For those unemployed or disabled, or too old or young to support themselves, other means can ensure sufficient resources to protect them from hunger.

Many steps can be taken to help families achieve independence and security: a strong economy; an adequate minimum wage that, like the one a generation ago, lifts a small family out of poverty; private and public sector provision of jobs and job training; strategies to create and increase assets among working families; affordable housing initiatives; social insurance protection for the unemployed and retired; and health insurance, child care, and refundable tax credits that recognize the importance of meeting basic human needs and that reward the work efforts of low-income families.

A sustained and comprehensive investment in the economic security of all American families will ensure that inadequate income never again results in lack of needed nutrition for the children and adults of our country.

Policies to reward work and savings, along with the ready support of nutritious food programs, will ensure that residents of the United States are not hungry tomorrow or any time in the future. Ending hunger in America will dramatically improve the lives of so many of our children and families. Ending hunger will make us a stronger nation.

This goal is achievable. The time is now. We call upon the President, Congress, and other elected leaders in states and cities to provide decisive leadership to end hunger in America. Let us all work together, private and public leaders, community, religious, business and charitable groups, to achieve an America where hunger is but a distant memory and we live true to the values of a great nation.

NATIONAL ANTI- HUNGER ORGANIZATIONS



The Alliance To End Hunger
C/o Bread for the World
50 F St. NW, Ste. 500
Washington, DC 20001
www.alliancetoendhunger.org



Feeding America
Formerly America's Second Harvest
35 E. Wacker Drive, Ste. 2000
Chicago, IL 60601
www.feedingamerica.org



Association of Nutrition Services Agencies
1015 18th Street, NW #710
Washington, DC 20036
www.ansanutrition.org



Food Research and Action Center
1875 Connecticut Ave., NW, #540
Washington, DC 20009
www.frac.org



Bread for the World
50 F St. NW, Ste. 500
Washington, DC 20001
www.bread.org



MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
1990 S. Bundy Drive, Ste. 260
Los Angeles, CA 90025
www.mazon.org



Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
820 First St. NE, Ste. 510
Washington, DC 20002
www.cbpp.org



RESULTS
750 First Street NE, Suite 1040
Washington, DC 20002
www.results.org



Share Our Strength
1730 M St., NW, Ste. 700
Washington, DC 20036
www.strength.org



Congressional Hunger Center
Hall of the States Building
400 North Capitol Street, NW
Suite G100
Washington, DC 20001
www.hungercenter.org



Society of St. Andrew
3383 Sweet Hollow Road,
Big Island, VA 24526
www.endhunger.org



The End Hunger Network
365 Sycamore Road
Santa Monica, CA 90402
www.endhunger.com



World Hunger Year
505 8th Ave., 21st Floor
New York, NY 10018
www.worldhungeryear.org