

United We Serve

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FEED A NEIGHBOR INITIATIVE Anti-Hunger Volunteer Toolkit

Although we are the richest nation in the world, 49 million people, including more than 16 million children, were at risk of going hungry last year in America. To end hunger in our country, we must work together and address the problem in our own communities. The families, children and individuals that worry about where their next meal will come from, or have to skip a few meals, could live right next door to you. Everyone has a role to play.

In this spirit, the Corporation for National and Community Service is launching the United We Serve: Feed a Neighbor initiative in collaboration with the White House and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The purpose of the initiative is to raise public awareness of hunger issues and ask Americans to help ensure that their neighbors have access to nutritional food this winter and throughout the year.

There are many ways for you to help combat hunger through service. Go to [Serve.gov](http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/Err83/) to search for local volunteer opportunities. Or consider getting involved in the following anti-hunger projects in your community. This volunteer toolkit was created by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. For the latest Economic Research Service data on Food Insecurity in America, please visit <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/Err83/>.



SURROUND CHILDREN WITH NUTRITIOUS FOOD WHERE THEY LIVE, LEARN, AND PLAY

Why Should I Care?

We have all experienced hunger at one time or another: We've all craved a midnight snack, wanted something salty or skipped a meal. But there's a big difference between trying to satisfy a brief craving or stomach growl and wondering when or from where your next meal will come. More than 16.7 million- almost one in four-children in America are at risk of hunger. Many of these children will endure lifelong consequences as a result

of having limited access to nutritious foods. In fact, they're more likely to suffer poorer health, fatigue, hospitalizations, behavioral difficulties and impaired performance at school. And hunger doesn't discriminate. It can affect any child-even those you'd least expect. Despite the good efforts of government, private-sector institutions and everyday Americans, millions of our children still don't have daily access to the nutritious meals they need to live active, healthy lives.

What Can I Do?

Help kick off a local school's breakfast program to ensure all kids get a good start to the day

We all know that starting the day with a healthy breakfast is critical for our young people. This



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toolkit is designed for individuals who have an interest in increasing the number of schools and children participating in the School Breakfast Program, determining the type of meal service most suited to their needs and developing a marketing plan that will capture the attention and support of everyone involved with the lives of school children: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/CND/Breakfast/toolkit/Default.htm>.

Serve fresh fruits and vegetables to school children

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) can be an important catalyst in efforts to combat childhood obesity by helping children learn more healthful eating habits. The program targets schools with a high percentage of children receiving free and reduced price school meals. It has been successful in introducing children to a variety of produce that they otherwise might not have the opportunity to sample. Encouraging more elementary schools to apply for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program will create healthier school environments and make a difference in school children's present and future health:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/FFVP/FFVPdefault.htm>.

Create a School Health Council to assess and improve your school district's Wellness Policy
Schools that participate in the National School Lunch and/or School Breakfast programs are required by Congress to have a local wellness policy that promotes the health of students and addresses the growing problem of childhood obesity. Local wellness policies help ensure that schools are addressing child health in a comprehensive way, including nutritious food, nutrition education, physical education and preventive screening. Learn how you can support your school district's efforts here:

http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Healthy/wellnesspolicy_steps.html.

Share your great healthy school meal ideas with other schools

There is a role for the culinary community to play in ensuring our schools provide nutritious food to students. Already chefs across the country are connecting with schools to share recipes, ideas about nutritionally balanced meals and other support.? Visit this user-friendly website to join the discussion: www.usda.gov/chefstoschools.

Success Story

North Carolina's Healthy Schools Initiative: In North Carolina, concern for the health of students has led the General Assembly to take a variety of actions to emphasize the importance of health in early life. For example, the North Carolina Healthy Schools Initiative was established to encourage the development of coordinated school health programs, a model which includes health education, health services, healthy school environment, counseling, psychological and social services, physical education, nutrition services, staff wellness and family and community involvement. Many of these programs and services exist in schools and communities yet the system of delivery is often fragmented and uncoordinated. A coordinated approach to school health improves the health of young people. It also enhances their capacity to learn through the support of families, schools, and communities working together. At its core, Coordinated School Health is about keeping students healthy over time, reinforcing positive healthy behaviors throughout the school day, and making it clear that good health and learning go hand in hand.



ENSURE CHILDREN HAVE FOOD IN THE SUMMER MONTHS WHEN SCHOOL IS OUT

Why Should I Care?

Hunger does not take a break during the summer months when school is out. Even in good economic times, millions of families struggle to feed their children healthy meals during the summer when their children no longer eat breakfast and lunch at school. As tough economic conditions continue, millions of parents are now unemployed or have had their wages cut. And families' budgets are stretched to the limit. When summer begins, parents of the millions of children who relied on the National School Lunch Program for free or reduced-price meals every day must figure out how to prevent their children from going hungry during the summer.

The Summer Food Service Program was created to address this problem. However, although nearly 19 million children depend on free and reduced-price school meals for the nine months that schools are typically in session, only about 2.3 million children participate in the Summer Nutrition Programs. One of the primary reasons for this disparity is a lack of host sites for the program, in both urban and rural areas.

What Can I Do?

Offer your organization's space to serve as a feeding site or prepare food for other sites

This winter sign up your community center or congregation to be a summer feeding site. Work with your State to see if you might even be able to become a program sponsor with several sites in your community. Deadlines vary by state, but typically occur in mid-spring. Details are here: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Summer/>.

Supervise activities at an existing feeding site

Children are more likely to attend a summer feeding site if there are recreational or education activities occurring around the meal hours. Share your creative, academic or recreational talents with local low-income children. This is a great opportunity for high school and college graduates: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Summer/library/outreach.html>.

Transport food or children to feeding sites, especially in rural areas

One of the greatest challenges of operating the Summer Food Service Program in rural areas is getting prepared meals to the feeding sites or ensuring children can get to a feeding site. Volunteers are crucial to making this program operate effectively in rural areas.

Resource

Summer Food Service Program Outreach - Use these tools to recruit sites, increase participation, and involve a variety of community stakeholders in the Summer Food Service Program: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Summer/library/outreach.html>.

Impact of Volunteering

Summer Nutrition Programs support quality programs for children and teens that keep them safe, learning, engaged, and active during the summer months. These programs reduce the loss of learning that often happens to children during the long summer break. By helping to enroll your community center, school, day-camp, or congregation as a summer feeding site, you will be giving hungry kids in your community a chance to learn, thrive and be fed all summer long.

Success Story

Little River Baptist Church, Ware Shoals, South Carolina: The sponsor is committed to expanding its program as demonstrated by the 58 percent increase in lunches served. Each year, Little River holds two planning meetings, one in February and one in April, with its partnering organizations from all sectors of the community—education, religion, business and the civic arena. The sponsor promotes Summer Food through radio advertisements and flyers which are placed in bags at grocery stores, on windshields at shopping malls, and in mailboxes. Local churches and Girl and Boy Scout Troops also assist the sponsor in distributing informational flyers. The Little River program developed a parent advisory group, a bi-weekly newsletter which is sent to parents of participating children and free health care screening services to attending children and their parents to maximize program participation.



SUPPORT FOOD BANKS AND FOOD PANTRIES

Why Should I Care?

Hunger prevents millions of Americans from living healthy, productive lives. Children who live in households affected by hunger are negatively affected in both their physical and mental development. This threatens their ability to become productive, contributing members of society when they grow up, which in turn threatens future American prosperity. Every day, families are forced to make the difficult decision between buying food and paying bills and rent. Many low-income families rely on emergency food assistance from our nation's food banks, food pantries, and feeding programs in order to make ends meet. In these tough economic times, the emergency food system is stretched to the brink because needs are up while donations are down. During the current recession, many formerly middle-class families have been forced to turn to their local food banks and food pantries for help. Contrary to popular belief, many people served by America's food banks have at least one working adult in their household. Many others are too old or too young to work. There are currently more than 200 food banks in the country, with more than 63,000 affiliated agencies like food pantries and shelters. This network distributes more than 2.5 billion pounds of food to needy Americans each year.

What Can I Do?

Donate food to your local food bank

Make sure to contact your local food bank to ensure your donation meets the needs of the food bank and the population it serves. In addition, you can stretch your dollar by shopping in bulk, ensuring that the Food Bank gets the food items it most needs and reducing distribution and sorting costs.

Enroll eligible food pantry clients in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Many food pantries offer a variety of social services to their clients. Volunteer at food pantry to screen people for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as Food Stamps), talk to families about other nutrition assistance programs such as School Meals, and the Summer Food Service Program, and help connect eligible families to a variety of federal benefits.

Use your professional skill set to help the food bank operate more effectively

Food pantries often need skilled volunteers to help them run their operations. These are ongoing opportunities (such as public relations, accounting, IT and web design services, strategic planning, legal, accounting, design, and fundraising work), and volunteers can often perform these tasks on their own schedules, mostly from their home or office.

Resource

Find your local food bank at *Serve.gov* or go to <http://feedingamerica.org/foodbank-results.aspx>.

Impact of Volunteering

In these tough economic times, America's food banks, food pantries and feeding programs are more important than ever. With the food banking

system under enormous strain, there is a tremendous need for both volunteers and donations of food and funds to emergency food programs across the country. By helping one of these programs, you can help ensure that those who are struggling through the current recession need not go hungry.

Success Story

The New York City Coalition Against Hunger (NYCCAH) represents the more than 1,200 nonprofit soup kitchens and food pantries in New York City and the more than 1.3 million low-income New Yorkers who are forced to use them. The Coalition works to meet the immediate food needs of low-income New Yorkers and enact innovative solutions to help them move "beyond the soup kitchen" to self-sufficiency. The Coalition has an emphasis on recruiting skills-based volunteers, particularly for projects that help people apply for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The Coalition Against Hunger's volunteer matching system allows volunteers to find emergency feeding programs (soup kitchens, food banks, and other nonprofit groups) that are in need of volunteer assistance. The web tool allows volunteers to search by criteria matched to particular preferences, including neighborhood, travel time, subway line, and professional skills: <http://www.nyccah.org/volunteermatching/index.php>.



PROVIDE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE OUTREACH

Why Should I Care?

Currently, 36 million Americans participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly food stamps. SNAP helps low-income people and families buy the food they need for good health. You apply for benefits by completing a state application form. Benefits are provided on an electronic card. Thousands of families, seniors and individuals that are qualified do not apply for SNAP benefits. As a result, their families must make difficult choices between food, medicine, rent and utilities. These families often rely on food banks, pantries and soup kitchens for food, which does not sustain the family beyond a few days ration of food.

What Can I Do?

Enroll eligible low-income community members in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Wherever low income families or individuals may gather - religious organizations, community centers, schools, or food banks - there is an opportunity to help them enroll in SNAP. Volunteer to screen people for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, talk to families about other nutrition assistance programs such as School Meals, and the Summer Food Service Program, and help connect eligible families to a variety of federal benefits: <http://www.snap-step1.usda.gov/fns/>.

Resources

An Eligibility Pre-Screening Tool can be used to determine if you may be eligible to receive SNAP benefits. This Pre-Screening Tool is not an application for SNAP. An application for SNAP benefits must be made at your local SNAP Office: <http://www.snap-step1.usda.gov/fns/>.

Community Partner Outreach Toolkit is full of great resources and how-to's. In it, you'll find the latest SNAP facts and figures as well as frequently asked questions and program talking points. Take advantage of our tips, templates, and promising practices to ensure you're making the most of your organization's outreach activities. Lastly, don't forget to check out our new cultural competency or disaster outreach material:

http://www.fns.usda.gov/FSP/outreach/tool-kits_partners.htm.

For additional application information, visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/FSP/outreach/map.htm>.

Impact of Volunteering

Thousands more families can rest assured that they will have extra funds to help pay for food so their children will not have to be at risk for hunger throughout the month.

Success Story

The Ohio Benefit Bank is a web-enabled, counselor-assisted program being implemented by The Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks and used by faith-based and community groups and public agencies at over 1,000 sites across Ohio, in partnership with the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. Ohio Benefit Bank sites allow low and moderate-income Ohioans to file electronically their federal and state income tax returns. Simultaneously, they find out finding out their eligibility, and complete applications, for tax credits and benefits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, child care subsidies, home energy assistance and children's health care insurance. Volunteer Ohio Benefit Bank counselors devote their valuable time and energy assisting clients with various applications for benefits through the software program. These volunteers help Ohio's most vulnerable people acquire basic resources like food, health care, and financial support. Hands-on, one-on-one training is available to all volunteers. There are also AmeriCorps VISTA and AmeriCorps*State positions available for people interested in full-time volunteering.



HELP HUNGRY OLDER ADULTS

Why Should I Care?

Every day, older adults across America go to bed hungry, which negatively impacts their health and well-being. As health care, food, and energy costs have continued to rise in recent years, older Americans, especially those living on fixed incomes, are increasingly finding their resources stretched thin. This financial strain often means having to choose between paying for medicine and buying groceries. Hunger and undernourishment can impact the health of any person, but older adults are particularly vulnerable. Proper nutrition contributes substantially to the health, self-sufficiency, and quality of life

for seniors. At the same time, older adults are at greater risk for illnesses tied to poor nutrition, including deficiency diseases and impaired digestion. As the population ages in the United States, health problems caused by malnutrition will continue to be a contributing factor to the rising costs of public and private health care programs in America.

What Can I Do?

Volunteer at the local Meals On Wheels or Agency on Aging

There are plenty of volunteer opportunities at Meals on Wheels programs near you. People with all schedules, interests and abilities can help at a local Meals on Wheels program - whether

they want to be hands-on or behind the scenes or whether they can volunteer during weekdays or only on evenings and weekends. The following are some examples of volunteer opportunities that exist at local Meals on Wheels programs: Drivers and Runners, Office Help, Meal Preparation and Packaging, Telephone Calls to check up on beneficiaries and Senior Center Aides. To sign up to volunteer with Meals on Wheels visit: <http://www.mowaa.org/Page.aspx?pid=396>. To sign up to volunteer with an Agency on Aging visit: <http://www.n4a.org/about-n4a/?fa=aaa-title-VI>.

Help Seniors learn about and apply for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
Wherever low income seniors may gather - religious organizations, community centers, senior centers, or food banks - there is an opportunity to help them enroll in SNAP. Volunteer to screen people for the SNAP, talk to them about other nutrition education programs: <http://www.snap-step1.usda.gov/fns/>. Get more information and state specific applications at www.aarp.org/snapmap.

Offer to pick up food or drive seniors to the grocery store, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program offices or congregate meal sites

Transportation is a huge challenge for seniors and you can make a difference in their ability to access healthful food by supporting the needs of the seniors in your neighborhood.

Impact of Volunteering

One of the most important ways that you can help hungry senior citizens is to volunteer for your local Meals on Wheels program. Currently Meals on Wheels utilizes 1.2 million volunteers nationwide to distribute meals to seniors and the home-bound. However, to meet their current needs, Meals on Wheels programs need one million additional volunteers. Currently, two out of five Meals on Wheels programs in cities and towns across America have a waiting list. With additional volunteer help, Meals on Wheels could dramatically increase its ability to feed hungry seniors.

Success Story

Kelly Cannon, 29, has been delivering meals in Alexandria, Virginia for the past few months. Wanting to give back to her community, Kelley looked at a few different non-profit organizations before deciding to volunteer for Meals on Wheels. "There are many organizations in my community that are great and need help, but I decided to deliver meals to seniors in need because of the way their faces light up when I walk through their door," says Kelley. "Working with Meals on Wheels means as much to me as it does those who I help."

Cletus Gerber has been a volunteer driver for Meals on Wheels of Stark & Wayne Counties in Ohio for 17 years. He's never missed a day, except for when he was recuperating from quadruple-bypass heart surgery in 1996. Cletus Gerber is the embodiment of the selfless service shown by the agency's 400 volunteers. And, oh, yes - he's 87 years old. But he's not complaining, because he knows that the people on the delivery route he drives every week depend on him - particularly his fellow seniors. "I always enjoyed being around older people. Of course, I guess I am one, now," he said with a chuckle. "But it's a joy for me. It's not a hardship or anything." Gerber retired from farming in 1987. He had frequently noticed ads and other announcements about the need for volunteer drivers with Meals on Wheels, so he decided to give it a try. "I'm glad I did. It's been a great experience," he said. "I've made a lot of new friends, and renewed some old acquaintances. It's rewarding to help people. You can comfort them, too," he said. "It's a blessing to me personally. I'm getting as much of a blessing out of it as the people I'm helping are."



INCREASE ACCESS TO FRESH PRODUCE

Why Should I Care?

Imagine a world without fresh fruits and vegetables. This is the reality for many families throughout the country that live in communities without access to fresh produce. Eight percent of Americans, most of whom live in low-income areas, have limited access to a supermarket or large grocery store that sells fresh produce. Where low-income families do have access to these stores, the high price of fresh produce often keeps them out of reach despite their presence on the shelves. One way to address this problem is to encourage community gardening in both urban and rural areas. During the Second World War, as a way to encourage the American public to grow their own food and supplement their rations, the Department of Agriculture established a campaign to convert lawns into "victory gardens". This campaign sparked the first community gardens in public spaces that people collectively tended. By 1943, 20 million households had set up victory gardens, supplying more than 40 percent of the nation's produce. Areas that have limited access to fresh, healthy foods often overlap with areas that have high rates of obesity and chronic, diet-related disease. This phenomenon suggests that a lack of affordable fresh produce is negatively affecting the quality of life in low-income areas in a broad variety of ways.

What Can I Do?

Organize and Plant a Community Garden

Make a difference by organizing and planting a community garden at your school, congregation, or community center, and sharing the produce with local neighbors or food pantries. For help starting a community garden, visit

<http://www.gardenwriters.org>

<http://www.communitygarden.org/learn/starting-a-community-garden.php>

<http://extension.missouri.edu/explorepdf/miscpubs/mp0906.pdf>

Gather produce from a farmer's fields and ensure it is donated to a local food bank or pantry

To learn more about gleaning and connect with local organizations that are active in rescuing produce that would otherwise go to waste, visit <http://www.endhunger.org/>.

Help your local farmers obtain the certification to accept WIC or Seniors Farmers Market Vouchers as well as EBT cards

If you sell produce at a farmers market, or know someone who does, ensure that you or they can accept WIC and Seniors Farmers Market Vouchers, as well as EBT cards. For more information visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/seniorFMNP/seniorfmnpoverview.htm>.

Help your local farmers market be able to accept the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

For more information visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/EBT/fm.htm>.

Impact of Volunteering

By getting involved in community gardening, you can help supply yourself and your neighbors with an important source of affordable, fresh, healthy food. Working together, we can build much stronger local and regional food systems that will contribute to feeding Americans across our country healthier food.

Success Story

What was once an unused vacant city lot is now **The New Roots Community Farm**, a 2.3 acre parcel of land in San Diego and project of the International Rescue Committee. The eighty families who till the land are from Cambodia, Somalia, Burma, Laos, Uganda, Congo, Vietnam, Mexico and Guatemala. Each participating family has been allocated 600 sq. ft. of growing space and can produce approximately \$500 worth of fresh, organic produce each season on a lot this size. For a family of four on a food stamp budget, this represents a 40 percent increase in their overall food resources! The success of the farm is largely due to the efforts of many stakeholders including corporations, community groups, schools, landscapers, churches, and individuals in efforts towards community improvement. But beyond food production, New Roots has also become a hub for community building among refugees, new immigrants and neighbors. In only a few short months, more than 200 individuals have volunteered at the farm, 20 youth have interned for more than 140 hours each, and participants have attended workshops on water conservation, organic methods, soil fertility and composting. Here the farmers cultivate not just corn, beans, tomatoes and eggplants, but also a deeper understanding of their neighbors' cultures. Go to <http://www.newrootssd.blogspot.com>.

Plant a Row began in Anchorage, Alaska, in the garden column of Jeff Lowenfels, a former Garden Writers Association president. He asked his readers to plant a row of vegetables for Bean's Cafe, a local feeding program. The initiative was so successful that he introduced it to Garden Writers Association as a national program. It took five years to reach the first million pounds of donated produce. The next million was reached in only two years, and in the next eight years, more than a million pounds of food was donated each year. This is a significant contribution considering that each pound of produce supplements 4 meals. Since 1995, over 14 million pounds of produce providing more than 50 million meals have been donated by American gardeners. Go to http://www.gardenwriters.org/gwa.php?p=par/par_campaign.html.



UNDERSTAND THE ISSUES IN YOUR COMMUNITY AND DEVELOP A PLAN TO END HUNGER

Why Should I Care?

Ending hunger in America is a monumental task. There are many factors that contribute to hunger, and they often differ from community to community. While a great deal of data exists on hunger at the national level, and to a lesser extent at the state level, an accurate assessment of the food security of individual counties and communities is much harder to obtain. Depending on the specific needs of a community, some approaches to ending hunger may be much more effective than others. If a community does not understand its unique food security challenges, it is much more

difficult for that community to effectively address the problem. As such, a key step towards ending hunger is to first understand the unique challenges and causes in your community. You can form innovative partnerships with local stakeholders that have the potential to make huge strides towards ending hunger in your area. Dozens of communities and a handful of states have developed plans for ending hunger in their area, resulting in important effects on policy and program funding.

What Can I Do?

Bring together community stakeholders to analyze hunger in your community

Use this USDA Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit to analyze the hunger situation in your community: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/EFAN02013/>.

Draft a plan to end childhood hunger

Gather local stakeholders from business, social services, faith and non-profit organizations together to draft and implement a plan to end hunger. Go to http://strength.org/state_partnerships/.

Help increase SNAP participation in your community

Use the Community Partner Outreach Toolkit to increase SNAP participation in your community: This toolkit is full of great resources and tips. In it, you'll find the latest Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) facts and figures as well as frequently asked questions and program talking points. Take advantage of our tips, templates, and promising practices to ensure you're making the most of your organization's outreach

activities. Lastly, don't forget to check out our new cultural competency and disaster outreach materials at http://www.fns.usda.gov/FSP/outreach/tool-kits_partners.htm.

Impact of Volunteering

Your community can benefit tremendously from a thorough understanding of its unique hunger situation. Once you can show your local elected officials, faith-based and community leaders, and other community stakeholders how hunger affects your community, you will be in a much stronger position. This could lead to forming meaningful and lasting partnerships that will have a huge impact on ending hunger in your area. Others who have done this have formed state or city-wide food policy councils to continue the work.

Success Story

The Maryland Governor's Office for Children (GOC) coordinates child and family-oriented care with the Children's Cabinet to create and promote an integrated, community-based service delivery system for Maryland's children, youth and families. The Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland includes a strong coalition of organizations and agencies on the national and local levels, representing the private and public sectors, including the Maryland State Department of Education, Advocates for Children and Youth, the Maryland Food Bank, Share Our Strength, Maryland Hunger Solutions/Food Research and Action Center, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the Maryland Department of Human Resources. They have developed a plan and measurements that will track their progress and create the necessary partnerships to impact the lives of Maryland's most vulnerable children. Go to http://strength.org/state_partnerships/.

Definition of Food Insecurity: At times during the year, households with food insecurity were unable to acquire adequate food to meet the needs of all their members because they had insufficient money or other resources for food. In households with very low food insecurity, normal eating patterns of one or more household members were disrupted and food intake was reduced at times during the year because of insufficient money or other resources for food.

