

MEMORANDUM

TO: Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness and Housing
FROM: HomeBase
RE: Food Security
DATE: June 17, 2011

Background and Definitions

In many previous RSC meetings, we have examined various methods of expanding mainstream benefits access. The RSC has held numerous discussions on how to synchronize the homeless-targeted work of community-based organizations and local government with the mainstream resources being expanded as a “safety-net” within each community. This meeting will build on some of these earlier discussions, in the context of food insecurity and hunger. Although food insecurity is distinct from hunger, people experiencing homelessness suffer from both, and local interventions to prevent the two are intertwined. The USDA defines *Food Security* as “Access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food security includes at a minimum: (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, stealing, or other coping strategies).” *Hunger* is defined as; “the uneasy or painful sensation caused by a lack of food, or the recurrent and involuntary lack of access to food. Hunger may produce malnutrition over time...Hunger...is a potential, although not necessarily, a consequence of food insecurity.”¹

Furthermore, in California during the past few years, food security efforts have been widespread, including: rebranding Food Stamps as CalFresh at the state level, changing city zoning codes to promote urban agriculture, and designing Food Bank programs that link the oversupply of farm produce directly to families in need. This memo will simply highlight a few of the best practices at the local level that are most relevant to our collective work and provide updates on relevant legislation and budget changes.

The 2010 San Francisco Food Security Task Force annual report provides a picture of local food insecurity in 2010.²

- About 1 in 5 adults in San Francisco struggled to feed themselves and their families last year. Between 2006 and 2010, the average number of households the Food Bank serves per month nearly doubled (from 52,100 to 100,500).
- San Francisco’s 2009 Point-in-Time Count reported that about 40% of homeless respondents were food insecure. The overwhelming majority (78%) reported relying on free meals to feed themselves.
- A July 2009 study of 250 poor San Franciscans living with HIV/AIDS recruited through the

¹ <http://www.ers.usda.gov/amberwaves/april05/datafeature/>

² <http://www.sfgov3.org/index.aspx?page=753>

Research on Access to Care in the Homeless (REACH), found that 54% were food insecure.

Episcopal Community Services has convened its own Food Task Force to identify challenges of permanent supportive housing residents. Some of the challenges identified include:

- Permanent Supportive Housing residents have limited access to kitchens.
- Lines at congregate food sites are very long. As a result, only about 20% of housing first residents access these sites. (Anecdotal estimate)
- The Food Bank has a partnership with Housing First/ SRO sites. However, at some sites, the deliveries are not always usable.

Discussion Question:

1. What are your communities doing to identify and address food insecurity among people experiencing and or at risk of homelessness?

Mainstream Benefits Access

CalFresh

Between 2007 and 2010, the number of Californians receiving CalFresh food benefits increased from 2,025,130 to 3,521,703.³ The Federal government and the State of California have implemented measures to increase benefit access. In an effort to reduce stigma among those eligible for benefits, California rebranded SNAP (Food Stamps) as “CalFresh.” The USDA has implemented a Program Access Index (PAI) as a strategy for increasing access to Food Stamps. PAI estimates SNAP/ CalFresh utilization at state and county levels. As shown in the general formula below, the county-level PAI estimates CalFresh utilization among individuals who meet three eligibility criteria:

- Income below 125 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG)
- No participation in the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), and
- No receipt of Supplemental Security Income (SSI):

$$\text{PAI} = \frac{(\text{CalFresh Participants}) - (\text{Disaster CalFresh Recipients})}{(\text{Individuals with Income} < 125\% \text{ FPG}) - (\text{FDPIR Participants}) - (\text{SSI Recipients})}$$

Fresno County received the highest ranking with a PAI of .788, followed by Tulare (.769) and Del Norte (.731) Some local examples of success include:

Shasta County

CalFresh supports 22,600 people (mostly children) in Shasta County.⁴ In previous years, up to 9,000 residents have been eligible for benefits but did not register. The county was recognized at a recent CalFresh Forum for its outreach to seniors, children, non-English speaking and ESOL residents and people experiencing homelessness. In addition, Healthy Shasta has implemented

³ cbp.org/pdfs/2011/CaliforniaBudgetBites/110412_CalFresh.pdf

⁴ <http://anewscafe.com/2011/03/01/fruit-and-vegetable-advocates-are-not-nuts/>

Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) technology to local farmers' markets and for promoting its use with vouchers for CalFresh.

San Diego

Targeted as a high need county by the USDA, San Diego has a large population of people eligible but not participating in CalFresh. 2-1-1 San Diego connects callers with health and community services through a 24/7 phone line. Through 2-1-1, operators assist eligible beneficiaries in the CalFresh application process over the phone.⁵

San Francisco

A new website was launched: www.benefitsSF.org for people to check if they are eligible and to apply online for CalFresh. In order to increase access and options for individuals, over 35 restaurants now accept CalFresh. This addition is beneficial for seniors, homeless individuals and families, as well as others without access to kitchens or ability to make meals. The San Francisco Food Security Task Force has also recently focused on expanding CalFresh access to the growing senior population.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some ways your community has or is currently expanding access to CalFresh?
2. How will the growing senior population impact the need for food programs?

Relevant California Legislation⁶

Date	Assembly Bill	Name and Brief Description	Status	Rep
Dec. 6, 2010	AB 6	The CalFresh Act of 2011: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Would repeal the requirement of fingerprinting beneficiaries ✓ Would lessen the burden on county reporting ✓ Would introduce the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) benefit ✓ Would remove the continuous appropriation from the General Fund for CalWorks ✓ Would create a state-mandated local program for CalWORKS and CalFresh benefits 	Passed Assembly. Headed to Senate	Fuentes
Dec. 15, 2010	AB 69	Increasing Senior Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Would establish a pilot project in 2 areas of the state in order to more easily enroll eligible recipients into CalFresh 	Passed Assembly. Headed to Senate	Beall

⁵ <http://www.independent.com/news/2011/feb/09/santa-barbara-county-ranks-50th-utilization-calfre/?print>

⁶ <http://cfpa.net/2011leg/index.html>

Feb. 17, 2011	AB 828	The Nutritional Assistance for Families Act ✓ Would remove additional eligibility requirements for individuals convicted of drug-related felonies	Senate Rules	Swanson
Feb. 17, 2011	SB 471	Limiting Healthy Foods in CalFresh ✓ Would modify the list of allowable food items purchased under CalFresh to limit access to sweetened beverages	Held in Assembly Human Services	Rubio

Relevant Federal Legislation

The House passed a budget plan that would convert SNAP into a block grant program and reduce funding by \$127 billion in the 2012-2021 period. The Food Research and Action Center is concerned that these changes would limit spending, cap eligibility, create waiting lists, and/ or sharply reduce benefits.⁷

SSI

RSC has discussed and implemented solutions to expanding SSI benefits through SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery Initiative), Policy Academies and training programs. While expanding access to SSI has provided a safety net for many, SSI recipients are ineligible for CalFresh.

Furthermore, in response to sizeable state budget shortfalls, SSI benefits have been reduced.⁸ The maximum monthly SSI/SSP grant for individuals will drop to the federal minimum of \$830 in July 2011, a reduction of \$77 per month (8.5 percent) compared to the maximum grant of \$907 in January 2009. Food programs that are currently operating at capacity are concerned that this cut will significantly increase the need.

Discussion Question:

1. While the local, state and federal governments are actively encouraging the expansion of benefit access, significant budget cuts will reduce the safety net for individuals experiencing and at risk of homelessness. As a community, what are some potential responses to these challenges?

Other Relevant California Legislation

Dec. 16, 2010	AB 70	California Health and Human Services: Public Health Federal Grant Opportunities ✓ Would require the California Health and Human Services Agency to direct the appropriate departments to apply for federal community transformation grants under Patient Protection and Affordable Health Care Act (PPACA) and Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act (HHFKA).	Held in Assembly Health	Fuentes
Feb. 16,	AB 581	Public Health: Food Access ✓ Would create the California Healthy Food	Senate Rules	Perez

⁷ <http://frac.org/leg-act-center/budget-and-appropriations/budget-analysis/>

⁸ <http://www.cbp.org/>

2011		Financing Initiative in 2015 for the purpose of expanding access to healthy foods in underserved communities and to leverage further funding		
Feb. 17, 2011	AB 839	Putting Breakfast First <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Would report findings regarding the importance of breakfast to student achievement ✓ Would require school districts to increase access to the federal School Breakfast Program 	Passed Assembly. Headed to Senate	Brownley
March 15, 2011	AB 152	Tax Credits to Farmers Donating Fresh Produce to Food Banks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Would require the State Dept. of Public Health to investigate and apply for federal funding opportunities regarding promoting healthy eating and preventing obesity ✓ Would require the State Dept. of Social Services (after Jan 1, 2012) to establish the State Emergency Food Assistance Program (SEFAP) ✓ Would allow a tax credit for the donation of fresh fruits or fresh vegetables to food banks 	Senate Rules	Fuentes

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