

LIVINGSTON COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES COLLABORATIVE BODY

Health and Human Service Needs FACT SHEET

Hunger in Livingston County

May 2015

What is “food insecurity”? A person who is food insecure struggles at times to put enough nutritious food on the table. A family runs out of food days or weeks before there will be any money to buy more. Parents may skip meals or eat less than is nutritionally required, to make more food available for their children. People are hungry, but eat less to stretch the available food over a few more days. **And less than half of food insecure individuals in Livingston County qualify for the government food program (FAP).**

Why is this issue so important to Livingston County? Having enough nutritious food is critical to living a healthy active life. A diet poor in nutrition leads to lifelong health complications such as obesity, Diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and heart disease. Costs to the community are high – treatment, lost productivity, hospitalizations, etc. A 2010 study, **“The Economic Costs of Domestic Hunger”** reports the negative impact of hunger to our nation at **\$167.5 billion**. That is **\$542 for every person** or **\$1,410 per household** in costs over and above the cost of government food programs.

Addressing hunger is especially important to our youngest children, as a lack of food and poor nutrition can have permanent and devastating effects on their development. Kids can't learn when they are hungry. They can't sleep. They have no energy. They can't function. And even more alarming, poor nutrition actually interferes with proper brain development, 85% of which happens before the child reaches kindergarten age.

What is the impact locally?

- **19,170** Food insecure Livingston County residents, including **7,290** children
- **10,137** Livingston County residents on government food assistance program
- **84%** Portion of FAP households with children, seniors, or disabled persons
- **5,715** Livingston County students eligible for free or reduced lunch (2014)
- **2 million+** Pounds of food distributed annually by Gleaners in Livingston County

What programs & services exist?

The **Livingston County Hunger Council** is a coalition of individuals, businesses, and organizations, committed to building a community-based food system where all can thrive. Over the last several years, the Council has significantly . . .

- Improved access to fresh produce
- Promoted nutrition education and healthier food choices
- Increased capacity and coordination of the food pantry network
- Closed the gap of over 5 million meals to become the first “food secure” county in the State of Michigan



What can the community do to help?

Today, the Council is focused on sustaining access to nutritious food, increasing availability of local fresh produce, integrating nutrition education with food programs, and making sure that children get the nourishment they need to grow up healthy and strong.



Join the Livingston County Hunger Council . . . together, we will continue to alleviate hunger and build a community-based food system where all can thrive!

- ☀ Organize a food drive for your neighborhood pantry.
- ☀ Volunteer to help with the community gardens, or help people use their Bridge Cards to purchase produce at local farmers markets – ksimmons@gcfb.org
- ☀ Support “Summer Lunch Bunch”, which provides meals to hungry kids during the summer when they don’t have access to school meals – give or volunteer. The Salvation Army – liz_welch@usc.salvationarmy.org
- ☀ Support Gleaners Community Food Bank, or your local food pantry, with monetary donations. \$1 contribution to Gleaners feeds one person for one day. Gleaners – bgreen@gcfb.org
- ☀ Volunteer your time and talent to support your local food pantry or meal program.
- ☀ Tell your friends, neighbors, and coworkers about hunger in our communities, and about the many ways that they can get involved. www.livingstonhunger.com
- ☀ Deliver meals to homebound seniors. C.Zastrow@lwmow.org
- ☀ Share produce from your own garden through a local food pantry, church, Hunger Council Produce Cart, or community event that can help get fresh quality produce to neighbors who may struggle to afford these items.
- ☀ Start a community garden with your church, neighborhood, or service organization.

Eat healthier.

Join a Hunger Council committee.

Support local farmers.

Buy local produce.



Visit a local food pantry or food program to see some of the great things happening In Livingston County.

Teach children about nutrition, how the food gets to their plate, and the importance of local agriculture.

Advocate for nutritional content labels.

Learn more about Hunger in Livingston County
Visit www.livingstonhunger.com

For more information contact Anne Rennie, HSCB Coordinator at 517-552-7140 or arennie@cmhliv.org.