



Food Insecurity



In 2018, 14.3 million American households were food insecure with limited or uncertain access to enough food. Due to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic more than 50 million people in America may experience food insecurity. Individuals and households may supplement their food and nutrition needs through national or local institutions including the Federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), local food banks, hunger relief organizations, and local departments of social services.

Q: What kinds of food insecurity services and supports are there?

There are a range of food insecurity services and supports which differ by region. This may include food pantries, food banks, soup kitchens, meal delivery programs, social services programs, school programs and not-for profit agencies or government programs like SNAP.

Q: How is eligibility determined for food insecurity services?

Food insecurity services eligibility is determined by a variety of factors which may include none or all of the following: Family size, age of family members or individuals, current finances, program enrollment, existence of disabilities or region of residence. Each food insecurity program has its own eligibility requirements.

Q: What is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the largest federal nutrition assistance program. SNAP provides benefits to eligible low-income individuals and families via an Electronic Benefits Transfer card. This card can be used like a debit card to purchase eligible food in authorized retail food stores.

To be eligible for this benefit program, applicants must live in the state in which they apply and meet certain bank balance limits. A household with an elderly (over 60) or disabled household member may have a higher bank balance limit.

Visit SNAP's eligibility page at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/recipient/eligibility> to find out more about eligibility requirements and how benefits are computed.

Q: How can I find my local Social Services Agency?

You can use the State Social Services Agencies search tool at <https://www.usa.gov/state-social-services> and find the listing for local agencies or contact your State Social Services Agency for information.

Q: How can I find a food bank, food pantry or soup kitchen near me?

You can find information about food banks or food pantries near you by contacting local social service agencies, non-profit organizations, and faith-based organizations by searching on the internet or calling local information phone lines. You can start by calling your town's municipal office. If they don't have a food pantry, they can probably refer you to a local foodbank. Check Food Pantries.org <https://www.foodpantries.org/> for their listing of local food pantries and try calling 211 which can locate local food pantries. Some communities have put up free walk-up food pantries where you can take what you need with no application forms needed.

Q: Are there food insecurity services that deliver food to individuals who are not readily able to leave the home or prepare their own food due to age or living with a disability?

Yes. In many regions there are food insecurity services that are able to deliver meals. This may be available through local non-profits or social services agencies or national organizations which have national providers such as Meals on Wheels. You can see if there is a Meals on Wheels provider near you at

<https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/find-meals>.

Q: Are there food services for children?

Yes. Low-income families should apply through their child's school or school district for the two national programs from the US Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) that provide free or reduced-price meals at school. One is called the **National School Lunch Program** (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp>) and the other is the **School Breakfast Program** (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/sbp/school-breakfast-program>). You can find out more about these programs and others available in your state by going to the FNS finder at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/contacts/contact-map?f%5B0%5D=program%3A39> to locate your state's agency website.

Universities are starting to address the problem of food insecurity amongst their students. Check with your student services office to see if they have aid or programs related to this.

Sources: <https://www.feedingamerica.org/>, <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america>, <https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/>

Need to talk to someone?

Our Information Specialists are available to answer your questions. Call toll-free 1-800-539-7309 Mon-Fri, 7 am-8 pm EST. Or schedule a call or ask a question online at <https://www.ChristopherReeve.org/Ask>.

Resources for Food Insecurity

211

<https://www.211.org/>

Call 211 and the 211 network will work to connect you with various social services in your local area including food pantries and other sources of food: <https://www.211.org/get-help/food-programs-food-benefits>

Feeding America

<https://www.feedingamerica.org/>

Feeding America is America's largest domestic hunger-relief organization with a network of 200 food banks across the country (<https://www.feedingamerica.org/our-work/food-bank-network>).

FoodPantries.org

<https://www.foodpantries.org/>

This group provides a directory of food pantries and soup kitchens in the United States.

Hunger Free America: National Hunger Hotline

<https://www.hungerfreeamerica.org/en-us/get-help>

The National Hunger Clearinghouse helps low-income individuals or communities by providing food assistance and other nutrition and social services information, serving as an important tool in combating hunger and promoting economic mobility. The clearinghouse is accessible two ways:

By Phone: Call the National Hunger Hotline, which operates from 7:00 AM – 10:00 PM Eastern Time. If you need food assistance, call 1-866-3-HUNGRY or 1-877-8-HAMBRE (for Spanish) to speak with a representative who will find food resources such as meal sites, food banks, and other social services available near your location.

By Text: Text “97779” to the automated service with a question that may contain a keyword such as “food”, “summer”, “meals”, etc. to receive an automated response to resources located near an address and/or zip code.

Meals on Wheels America

<https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/>

Meals on Wheels provides home delivered meals to seniors and people with disabilities. Enter your zip code here to find a local provider at <https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/find-meals>.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program>

SNAP Toll-free Information Number: 1-800-221-5689

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infants and Children (WIC)

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic>

The Food and Nutrition Service administers the WIC Program at the federal level; state agencies are responsible for determining participant eligibility and providing benefits and services, and for authorizing vendors. To apply to be a WIC participant, you will need to contact your state or local agency to set up an appointment. Check out your state's website or call the toll-free number (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/contacts?f%5B1%5D=program%3A32>). When you call to set up an appointment, someone will tell you the location nearest your home and what you need to bring with you.

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