

Handout #8 » Community-Based Food and Nutrition Assistance

Community organizations help hungry & food-insecure person in many ways:

Outreach

Connecting people to assistance programs provides substantial long-term help.

- » Making referrals so more low-income families receive federal help like SNAP (called FoodShare in Wisconsin), WIC, School Breakfast, Summer Food & Elderly Nutrition. Also referrals to health care, energy assistance, housing and tax credits programs because they help family budgets.
- » Providing computer workstations where families can check eligibility or apply for programs using the ACCESS website (www.access.wi.gov). Assisting people in using the website.
- » Creating or distributing resource guides to help households and food providers to know what programs are available (See: <http://fyi.uwex.edu/wisconsinconnections/>).

Food Distribution

Giving people food helps to meet a household's immediate needs.

- » Providing emergency supplies of free groceries through a local food pantry. Some offer culturally appropriate food for Hmong or Hispanic families.
- » Providing hot meals for low-income people at a meal site ("soup kitchen").
- » Delivering food to homebound persons. Local "Meals-on-Wheels" deliver meals to seniors, and food pantries sometimes deliver boxes of groceries to people's homes.
- » Serving meals to kids (summer/after-school) and seniors.
- » Supporting a "food bank" which serves as a central collection point for large amounts of donated and purchased food. Food is given to pantries for free or at very low cost.

Food Collection

Collecting food from community sources helps families have more to eat.

- » Organizing food drives to collect nonperishable food for pantries or fund-raisers to buy food. Partnerships are often with schools, churches, civic or community groups, or letter carriers.
- » Encouraging home gardeners to plant extra rows of produce to donate to a food pantry.
- » Collecting unharvested crops from farmers' fields or surplus produce from farmers' markets.
- » Collecting prepared foods from bakeries, restaurants, cafeterias, or conferences for meal sites.

Food Sources

Increasing access to healthy, low cost food through normal channels is also important.

- » Establishing or expanding community gardens so people can raise their own food. Distributing packets of seeds with brochures on gardening and canning so pantry clients can start gardens.
- » Starting or expanding voucher programs so families can buy nutritious produce at local farmers markets. This also generates revenue for farmers who may be low-income themselves.

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- » Subsidizing the purchase of shares in a Community Supported Agriculture farm in order to add fresh, high-quality produce to diets of low-income households while helping support farmers.
- » Working with a local Chamber of Commerce to bring a supermarket to an underserved area.
- » Starting a campaign to collect grocery store gift cards so pantries can help families to shop at retail food stores.

Education

Knowledge is one of the most powerful weapons against hunger.

- » Arranging for nutrition education to help pantry clients make the most of their resources. This can include cooking, menu planning, shopping, gardening, preserving food, and budgeting.
- » Conducting a community education or media campaign to increase awareness of local hunger issues and programs, and encourage donations, volunteers, and public policy advocacy.

Source:

Jonathan Bader, "A Summary of Wisconsin's Community Based Hunger Prevention Grants Program 1995-1999," Wisconsin Community Action Program Association. Revised and updated.