

HUNGER REPORT

October 2009



Photo Courtesy of Interfaith House

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	Page 3
Executive Summary	Page 4
Chapter One: Issues, Challenges and Opportunities	Page 9
Chapter Two: A New Vision for Hunger	Page 26
Chapter Three: Recommendations	Page 29
Appendix I: Nutrition and food assistance programs	Page 45
Appendix II: Indicators to monitor conditions and progress	Page 54
Appendix III: Research bearing on recommendations	Page 56
Endnotes	Page 57

This report was commissioned by The Chicago Community Trust in conjunction with *GO TO 2040*, the comprehensive regional planning campaign of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP). It is one of several dozen reports (http://www.goto2040.org/strategy_papers.aspx) that examine potential strategies for implementing the *GO TO 2040* regional vision. The findings, conclusions, and recommendations of this report in their entirety have not been endorsed by CMAP or the Trust and do not necessarily represent their policies or positions. This report's recommendations may be considered for inclusion in the *GO TO 2040* plan, which will be adopted in October 2010.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Hunger report was developed by the Greater Chicago Food Depository and the Northern Illinois Food Bank in collaboration with an advisory committee. The report is commissioned by The Chicago Community Trust to support the 2040 comprehensive regional planning effort led by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

LEAD AGENCIES

- Greater Chicago Food Depository
- Northern Illinois Food Bank

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- Kate Maehr (co-chair), Greater Chicago Food Depository
- Dennis Smith (co-chair), Northern Illinois Food Bank
- Joe Antolin, Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Rights
- Catherine Arnold, Benedictine University
- Lee Deuben, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
- Diane Doherty, Illinois Hunger Coalition
- Eileen Donnersberger, City of Chicago Department of Family and Support Services
- Diane Fager, Chicago Public Schools
- Alicia Huguelet, Greater Chicago Food Depository
- Pastor Leonardo Gilbert, Sheldon Heights Church of Christ
- Brenda Hanbury, Illinois Department of Human Services
- Grace Hou, Illinois Department of Human Services
- Paul Kuehnert, Kane County Health Department
- Jim Lewis, Chicago Community Trust
- Annie Lionberger, Chicago Public Schools
- Arlene Ortiz, City of Chicago Department of Family and Support Services
- Andrew Parkinson, Peapod, LLC
- Nicole Robinson, Kraft Foods
- Pam Terrell, Catholic Charities/Diocese of Joliet
- Nik Theodore, Center for Urban Economic Development, University of Illinois-Chicago
- Melissa Travis, People's Resource Center

Editor for this report was Vivian Vahlberg.

INTRODUCTION

In the severe economic crisis of 2009, Chicago-area anti-hunger organizations are frequently asked, “Will we see soup lines like we did in the 1930s?” The reality is that in some communities – the East Garfield Park neighborhood of Chicago, Ford Heights, Joliet and Zion, to name but a few – the lines of people waiting for food outside food pantries and soup kitchens have been long for years.

But there are important differences between the Great Depression and 2009. A portfolio of Federal hunger relief programs – including the Food Stamp Program (recently renamed Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP), the Women, Infants and Children program, National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Summer Food Service Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Commodity Supplemental Food Program and The Emergency Food Assistance Program – serves millions of Americans annually.

In Illinois, anti-hunger initiatives ranging from emergency food boxes to fresh produce and hot meal programs are operated by state and local governments and/or community-based organizations throughout the region. Additionally, a network of more than 960 non-profit food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, and child feeding programs supported by local food banks and private donations feed an estimated 687,000 individuals annually in the seven-county region of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP).

Because of this array of private and public programs, hunger in northern Illinois in 2009 is less a story of starvation and more one of hunger and access – of individuals and families simply not having access to enough healthful, nutritious food.

Hunger is still pervasive in the Chicago area. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), which defines food security as “access by all people at all times to enough nutritious food for an active, healthy life,” estimates that between 2005 and 2007, 9.5 percent of Illinois households experienced food insecurity. Nearly a third of those households were considered very food insecure. Additionally, the number of families facing food emergencies is growing; requests for emergency food assistance grew by an estimated 30 percent nationally in 2009 alone.

But participation in food assistance programs in the region is relatively low compared to demonstrated need. It is estimated that only 79 percent of Illinoisans eligible for Food Stamps/SNAP were enrolled as of 2006. Two child-focused programs are particularly underutilized: the School Breakfast Program and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), with Illinois currently ranking last in the nation in school breakfast enrollment. Many factors contribute to lower participation in programs such as Food Stamps/SNAP and the SFSP:

- Locations and hours of government offices that are not convenient for working households and others;
- Time-consuming application and renewal processes;

- Lack of understanding of eligibility criteria and stigma;
- Citizenship status and language barriers;
- Non-citizens who fear their citizenship status may be jeopardized by accessing benefits such as nutrition programs.

There are other challenges as well:

- Some people live in so-called “food deserts,” where high-calorie, high-fat fast foods are more readily available than grocery stores with fresh fruit, vegetables and other healthy food options;
- In recent years, food costs have increased, making it harder for families to make ends meet (although in 2009 food prices stabilized and in some cases decreased slightly);
- As demands and the nature of the food industry have shifted in recent years, there have been decreases in donated food, forcing major area food programs to purchase food to distribute;
- Poverty is expanding and dispersing throughout the region, shifting the areas of need from a concentrated inner-city population to an increasingly disparate suburban and ex-urban population;
- The fixed income senior population – which historically has lower participation in some nutrition programs – is growing.

The consequences of food insecurity are significant. According to a recent report on hunger by the Chicago Community Trust:

Research is beginning to show that the mental and physical changes that result from food insecurity have harmful effects on learning, development, productivity and psychological health, and family life. Food insecurity has been linked to impaired health status in children, resulting in higher illness rates. In addition, malnutrition, even at levels experienced in the United States, is related to impaired cognitive ability, lower test scores among students and psychological problems among teenagers.

The repercussions of hunger, food insecurity and poor nutrition limit the ability of a household to seize opportunities and move to exit poverty. And the health consequences of eating patterns are apparent as well, with a rising obesity rate among low-income individuals, where kindergarten-aged children are overweight at more than twice the national rate. Among the likely impacts of a child being overweight are early high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

A vibrant economy is dependent upon a healthy workforce and a strong educational system, which requires people who are physically capable of learning, working and creating. Thus, increasing access to quality food, including fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy, grains and protein, is essential for the health of individuals and of the community.

Unfortunately, hunger is not always recognized as a pervasive problem in Illinois and the Chicago area by legislators and other community leaders alike. But the array of institutions, agencies, programs, and advocates in the region who are invested as active stakeholders represent considerable resources and opportunities to overcome the challenges.

The challenges to progress stem from the lack of a coordinated vision and commitment; lack of coordination among governmental and private entities administering income supports and food assistance programs; the changing landscape of food assistance; changing demographics in the region, and a dearth of information regarding food insecurity in local communities in Illinois. While hunger, as a symptom of poverty, is unlikely to be entirely eradicated by 2040, an enhanced, streamlined system can ensure that everyone in the region has access to quality, nutritious food delivered in a dignified manner.

VISION STATEMENT

- Every person in the seven-county Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning region will have access to quality, nutritious food.
- No man, woman or child will be hungry.
- Supplemental and emergency food systems will be customer focused and provide service with dignity.
- There will be “no wrong door” for individuals and families in need of food assistance – meaning there will be multiple entry points for programs and services that will be client-centered as opposed to program-centered.
- Nutrition programs and services will be delivered collaboratively, in a streamlined, seamless fashion, regardless of whether they are federal, state, municipal or private in nature.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This vision can be achieved if the following recommendations are implemented:

PARTICIPATION

Increase participation in and access to federal nutrition assistance programs:

1. Establish Universal School Breakfast programs across the region.
2. Establish a pilot program to increase older adults’ participation in SNAP.
3. Increase availability of after-school, summer, and weekend nutrition sites and programs for children.
4. Increase public-private partnerships around benefits screening and enrollment.
5. Allow all legal immigrants and all children to receive benefits through all food assistance programs.

ACTION FRAMEWORK

Establish a framework to ensure recommendations are acted upon and achieved by 2040:

6. Establish a statewide Anti-Hunger Commission to review progress and ensure cross-collaboration among government entities and community partners – this will be essential to maintain momentum and ensure accountability in this endeavor.

7. Appoint a high-level statewide official (ideally a member of the Governor's leadership team) to oversee anti-hunger efforts.
8. Convene key stakeholders annually, with quarterly updates as needed, to identify more detailed solutions.

STATEWIDE SYSTEM

Transform the human services system to develop a statewide system that builds programs and their delivery around the needs of individuals and families:

9. Support the Health and Human Services Framework project.
10. Create better alignment of government entities providing nutrition programs and services.
11. Establish a universal ID/smart card to help streamline delivery of both government and private programs.
12. Maximize the use of technology by agencies delivering nutrition programs and services.
13. Create opportunities to meet customers where they naturally gather.
14. Establish equality of program services and delivery across the region and the state.
15. Reduce face-to-face meetings and interviews to apply and maintain participation in programs.
16. Expand flexibility of how services are provided.
17. Provide quality language assistance.
18. Develop simplified application and renewal processes.
19. Align government data systems and replace paper-based documentation systems with electronic.
20. Stagger the distribution of SNAP benefits to better serve consumers.

CHARITABLE DISTRIBUTION NETWORK

Strengthen the charitable food distribution network and develop alternate methods of delivering food assistance in underserved areas:

21. Develop food pantries or food assistance programs where families and individuals naturally gather.
22. Develop "super pantries" that connect people with comprehensive services.
23. Expand mobile food pantry programs.
24. Develop delivery systems to reach all those in need.

FUNDING

25. Maintain and increase funding for vital hunger relief programs through federal, state, and private funding.

METRICS

26. Create a regional food security measurement to track presence of hunger in the region.

OUTREACH

27. Develop a comprehensive public outreach plan that educates consumers about the full range of nutrition programs available.
28. Employ strategic social marketing to reframe anti-hunger and nutrition programs to overcome any associated stigma.

RETAILERS

29. Increase access to food retailers that offer quality, nutritious food in underserved areas.

PARTNERSHIPS

30. Increase partnerships between hunger-relief and local/urban agriculture efforts.

Chapter One

ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

In August 2008, as part of The Chicago Community Trust's and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's (CMAP) joint effort to develop a long-range plan for the Chicago region, a "hunger advisory committee" comprised of 20 individuals representing an array of community-based nonprofit organizations, government agencies and private corporations came together for the first of six meetings. The purpose of the advisory committee was to produce a planning document that would provide an overview of hunger in our region, identify the challenges and opportunities in responding to hunger, and identify strategies that would lead to the elimination of hunger and, in turn, create a stronger and healthier community. Over the course of nine months, the Hunger Advisory Committee defined a vision of equitable access to quality food, along with supporting principles that laid the groundwork for a set of recommendations that will redefine the way families and individuals access emergency and supplemental food within our region.

While the Hunger Advisory Committee recognizes hunger as a symptom of poverty and, thus, is unlikely to be entirely eradicated in three decades, we also believe that an enhanced, streamlined system can ensure that all individuals in our region – regardless of age, gender, race, economic circumstances, or citizenship status – should and can have access to quality, nutritious food delivered in a dignified manner.

The Hunger Advisory Committee convened and shaped its recommendations against a backdrop of severe economic turmoil:

- In the spring of 2009, the jobless rate in Chicago stood at 9.3%, a rate not seen in 17 years.
- The *2009 Report on Illinois Poverty* released by the Heartland Alliance Mid-America Institute on Poverty noted that the number of households receiving food stamps in Illinois increased by more than 12% in the last year while the number of individual visits to food pantries in the seven-county region increased by more than 30%.
- In the Chicago area, 253,000 individuals – 87,000 of them children – are likely to have been pushed into poverty as a result of the recession.¹ The projected increase, based on expectations that national unemployment will reach 9% this year, would represent a 27% jump in the number of people living in poverty in the Chicago-area over the past two years.
- Meanwhile, a state budget deficit of more than \$11 billion and the decreased value of stock portfolios for individual and institutional philanthropists raise serious concerns about the availability of resources to sustain programs just when they are most needed.

Many times during the course of the task force's work, parallels were being drawn in the national media between the current economic crisis and the Great Depression. A question posed again and again to area anti-hunger organizations was, "Will we see soup lines like we did in the 1930s?" The reality is that in some communities – the East Garfield Park neighborhood of Chicago, Ford Heights, Joliet and Zion, to name but a few – the lines of people waiting for food outside the doors of pantries and soup kitchens have been long for years.

But there are important differences between the America of the Great Depression and the America of 2009. A portfolio of Federal hunger relief programs – including the Food Stamp Program (recently renamed Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program, National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) – serve millions of Americans annually. Anti-hunger initiatives ranging from emergency food boxes to fresh produce and hot meal programs are operated by local governments throughout the region. And a network of more than 960 non-profit food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, child and adult care feeding programs supported by local food banks and private donations feed an estimated 687,000 individuals annually in the seven-county CMAP region.

Because of this network of private and public programs, hunger in America (and hunger in northern Illinois) in 2009 is less a story of starvation and more one of hunger and access -- of individuals and families simply not having access to enough healthful, nutritious food. Low-income individuals navigate a maze of requirements to secure food stamps only to find no grocery stores in their community. Those same individuals may turn to pantries for assistance but often the pantries can only offer shelf-stable food rather than an array of perishable goods, including produce. Meanwhile, far too many children in the region simply miss out on breakfast because the School Breakfast Program is not offered in all schools. In short, the barriers to accessing quality food – particularly fresh fruits and vegetables – are high.

Sadly, the consequences of quality food inaccessibility are significant. High calorie foods that are high in fat and sodium are often less expensive – and more available – than grains, produce and dairy products. As a result, nationally, there has been a rise in the number of low-income individuals who are overweight.

The situation is even more dire in our community. In 2003, the Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children (CLOCC) released an annual report demonstrating Chicago's kindergarten-aged children are overweight at more than twice the national rate. Furthermore, a study released in 2004 by the Sinai Urban Health Institute indicated that children from predominantly minority neighborhoods in Chicago are overweight at three to four times the national average.² Among the likely impacts of a child being overweight are early high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes and heart disease³

We believe increasing access to quality food, including fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy, grains and protein, is essential for the health of individuals and our community. Furthermore, providing access to quality food is a critical community strategy that complements and supports other regional goals. A vibrant economy is dependent upon a healthy workforce and strong educational system, all of which requires having individuals who are physically capable of learning, working and creating.

Table 1. Participation in Key Nutrition Programs

	Individuals Living in Poverty (100% FPL)⁴	% Living in Poverty	SNAP / Food Stamp Program (9/08)⁵	SNAP / Food Stamp Program (12/08)	SNAP / Food Stamp Program (3/09)	National School Lunch Program – Free & Reduced (10/08)	WIC (2/09)
Cook	758,802	14.6%	697,212	721,495	766,398	506,240	141,525
DuPage	41,366	4.5%	33,413	35,660	38,058	19,607	11,146
Kane	37,750	7.6%	36,548	39,094	43,270	37,505	16,655
Kendall	3,693	3.9%	3,505	3,963	4,300	3,317	1,169
Lake	42,197	4.5%	33,752	35,568	38,421	31,745	14,848
McHenry	17,943	5.7%	8,287	8,827	9,734	9,132	4,007
Will	38,201	5.8%	35,576	38,297	43,782	30,631	8,756
Illinois	<i>1,496,248</i>	<i>11.9%</i>	<i>1,321,197</i>	<i>1,371,282</i>	<i>1,448,755</i>	<i>922,955</i>	<i>305,035</i>

**When reviewing Table 1 it is important to note that the poverty data provided above is less current than the program participation data collected and does not account for the significant increase in unemployment that occurred in late 2008 and early 2009. Whereas the program data, such as SNAP participation does reflect newly unemployed households and individuals that may have only recently become eligible for SNAP. Additionally, the gross income eligibility level for SNAP is 130% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) and as such in some cases the number receiving SNAP is higher than the number living in poverty (100% FPL). Numbers listed are for individuals.*

STATE OF HUNGER IN THE REGION

Hunger is inextricably linked to poverty. According to the *Blueprint to End Hunger*, the root cause of hunger is a lack of adequate purchasing power in a household; it results when individuals and families cannot afford to purchase sufficient food. As the cost of health care, housing, utilities and raising children increases dramatically, while wages remain flat or lose relative purchasing power, individuals and families have even less money to spend on food.⁶

Despite being one of the wealthiest nations and the largest agricultural producer in the world, the United States is a country with pervasive hunger. Commitments to ending hunger have been made by politicians, advocates and policymakers and strides have been made over the past 50 years. Yet hunger is still a reality for millions of Americans. Illinois and the Chicago metropolitan area are not exempt from this reality.

FOOD SECURITY

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food security as “access by all people at all times to enough nutritious food for an active, healthy life.” It estimates that between 2005 and 2007, 9.5% of Illinois households experienced food insecurity, nearly a third of which were considered very food insecure. While estimates of food insecurity in the Chicago metropolitan area are not available in this study, it is reasonable to estimate that a large number of those reported as food insecure in Illinois reside in the Chicago metropolitan area, given the area’s concentration of both the population and poverty in the state.

Income inequality has increased dramatically over the last 20 years as the wage difference between rich and poor Americans has widened. In a 2003 interview, Jared Bernstein, while at the Economic Policy Institute, laid out the changing landscape of wealth and poverty in the United States:

“If you go back to 1979, prior to the period when the growth in inequality really took off in the United States, the top 5% on average had 11 times the average income of the bottom 20%. If you fast forward to the year 2000, the most recent economic peak, you find that that ratio increased to 19 times. So over the course of those two decades, the gap between the wealthiest and the lowest income families grew from 11 times to 19 times.”⁷

As the gap between rich and poor expands, Illinoisans on the lower end of the income spectrum have increasingly participated in income support programs available to them - including food assistance. From 2004 to 2008, there was a 25% increase in the number of Illinois households participating in the Food Stamp Program, now known as SNAP.⁸ There have also been significant increases in participation in the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program and child nutrition programs such as the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).⁹ According to Feeding America, the largest hunger-relief organization in the U.S., a growing number of families are requesting emergency food assistance nationwide – a 30% increase in 2009 alone.

While hunger affects hundreds of thousands in the Chicagoland area, its impact is more concentrated among certain groups of people. Food insecurity, like poverty, is prevalent among minorities, children and seniors:

- According to 2007 USDA data, 11.1% of U.S. households were food insecure in 2007. However, black and Hispanic households experienced food insecurity at a much higher rate than the national average: 22.2% of black households and 20.1% of Hispanic households were food insecure in 2007.
- A great many food insecure households also contain children, who are particularly vulnerable to the negative impacts of a lack of nutritious food. Nationally, approximately 38% of food insecure households contain at least one child. Statewide SNAP data indicates that 50% of all food stamp households include a child under the age of 18.

Seniors, who often live on a fixed income and may have to choose between paying costly medical bills or buying food, are also particularly vulnerable to poverty and hunger. Census data indicate that more than 96,000 seniors in Cook County live at 130% of the Federal Poverty Level or below – which is the gross income threshold for the SNAP/Food Stamp Program.¹⁰

When examining hunger in the region, participation levels in existing nutrition programs are an indicator of the level of need in the community. However, many nutrition programs are underutilized by the families and individuals that need them, so while examining program participation data, it is important to keep in mind that this likely under represents the true need in the community. Additionally, it is important to note that while these nutrition programs provide vital assistance to families, they are often not sufficient to meet the full nutritional needs of a household. For example, nearly 78% of households visiting a food pantry in Cook County reported that their Food Stamp/SNAP benefits did not last for the entire month.¹¹

FOOD DESERTS

While many individuals and families in the region lack the financial resources to purchase healthful and nutritional food, many also have the additional barrier of having no source of quality food within a reasonable distance to their home. This difficulty in accessing quality, nutritious food, including fresh fruits and vegetables, is a significant barrier to a household's food security. Lack of reasonable access compounds the challenges created by growing economic inequality and reduced purchasing power. The phenomenon of having no or distant grocery stores or outlets (offering fresh fruit and vegetables and other healthy food options), and instead more proximal fast food outlets (typically offering high calorie/ fat foods), is often referred to as a "food desert." In addition to putting people at risk for hunger or food insecurity, food deserts create an environment that poses negative health consequences to the individual and associated preventable costs in health care.¹²

Several food deserts have been identified in Chicago, concentrated in large geographic areas on the West and South sides of the city.¹³ But food deserts aren't limited to the core city; households living in the collar counties sometimes also lack access to a grocer that offers quality, healthful foods close to home.¹⁴

CURRENT EFFORTS TO ADDRESS HUNGER AND FOOD INSECURITY IN THE REGION

Efforts to address hunger in Illinois are carried out by many stakeholders, including governmental agencies, community-based organizations and private entities, acting alone and in collaboration with each other. Appendix I outlines in detail the various nutrition programs serving the region, as well as the governmental agencies and local stakeholders charged with carrying out the various programs. In addition to the many federally funded nutrition programs available, there are also many private efforts aimed at combating hunger and providing quality, nutritious foods for individuals and families in the region. These efforts include programs provided by charitable organizations such as food banks, food pantries and soup kitchens. The services provided by these entities are made possible in large part due to the generous support of individual donors, corporations, foundations, and food donors throughout the community.

Two of the primary state government entities administering programs to fight hunger in the region and the state are the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) and the Illinois State Board of Education. These two agencies administer and/or oversee many of the nutrition and hunger-relief programs that operate in Illinois. Reflecting their pivotal role a more detailed description of these two agencies and some of the programs they delivery is included below. There are also many other agencies and organizations, including school districts, food banks, and

anti-hunger organizations, that are responsible for delivering vital food and/or income supports to families throughout Illinois.

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS

The Illinois Department of Human Services administers many federal support and nutrition programs, including:

- The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program;
- The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children;
- The Commodity Supplemental Food Program;
- The Emergency Food Assistance Program;
- The Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Program.

Detailed information about how these programs are operated is available in Appendix I.

In addition to these programs:

- IDHS operates Family and Community Resource Centers (FCRC), local eligibility offices housed in the Division of Human Capital Development. While most counties in Illinois have a single FCRC, there are 21 FCRCs in Cook County. The FCRCs collect eligibility information from households for input into the state's data system, which ensures that income supports such as SNAP are implemented in accordance with federal rules and regulations.
- Illinois' WIC program provides nutrition education and supplemental foods to low-income families with a pregnant, breastfeeding or postpartum woman, and an infant or a child less than five years of age, who also have a medical or nutritional risk factor. Participants are issued vouchers which they redeem at approved grocery stores or WIC Food Centers. The WIC program serves approximately 43% of the infants born in Illinois each year.
- Additionally, Illinois is one of 28 states to offer the WIC Farmer's Market Nutrition Program. In 2008, nine counties were added to this program, bringing the total to 33 counties statewide (including Cook, Lake, and McHenry). Participants are provided coupons that can be used to purchase fresh fruit and vegetables at farmers markets from July 1 - October 31.
- The Breastfeeding Promotion and Support program of WIC provides breastfeeding education, promotion and support to more than 64,000 low income pregnant and breastfeeding women. Recognizing that breastfeeding is the optimal method of infant feeding, the WIC program encourages expectant mothers to choose breastfeeding.
- IDHS also administers several SNAP outreach efforts and projects. Through their contracted emergency food sites, food banks serve as partners with IDHS by ensuring that households receive or have access to food stamp applications, brochures and flyers when they obtain food assistance at the pantry sites.

Both Chicago Public Schools and the members of Feeding Illinois (formerly the Illinois Food Bank Association) partner with IDHS on the state's Food Stamp Outreach Plan. Food

stamp outreach conducted by the Children and Family Benefits Unit (CFBU) of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and the food bank members of Feeding Illinois serves to inform low-income households about the availability, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and benefits of SNAP and to assist households in applying for SNAP. Both CFBU and the Greater Chicago Food Depository also continue to assist these households to apply for food stamps and provide case management to insure that the families comply with requirements for continued eligibility.

- IDHS works to develop and manage demonstration and pilot projects to increase access to SNAP. One example is the Illinois Express Stamps pilot project, which allows households accessing food in select pantries in the collar counties surrounding Cook County to apply for food stamps on site at the pantry. If deemed eligible at the pantry, a household then receives a Link card that will be loaded with a short-term benefit (approximately 30 days) to provide assistance to the household until they can complete the full SNAP application process. From October 2006 through May 2008, nearly 1,228 households were approved for SNAP benefits through Express Stamps.

ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The Illinois State Board of Education administers the School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, Summer Food Service Program and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

- The Illinois School Lunch Program (SLP) is a voluntary program available to all public schools, private schools, and residential childcare institutions that agree to operate a nonprofit program offering free and reduced-price lunches meeting federal requirements to all children in attendance. Through the SLP, public and nonprofit private schools, pre-primary classes in schools, and residential childcare institutions receive cash reimbursement for each meal served. Children from families with incomes at or below 130% of the poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those between 130% and 185% of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals. Children from families with incomes over 185% of poverty pay full price, though their meals are still subsidized to some extent.
- The School Breakfast Program provides cash assistance for non-profit breakfast programs in public schools, nonprofit private schools of high school grade and under, and residential childcare institutions. Any child at a participating school may purchase a meal through the program. Eligibility thresholds are the same as the SLP. More than 275,000 persons participated in the program statewide in FY 2008. In 2005, legislation passed in the Illinois General Assembly that mandated school breakfast. School breakfast participation has gone up from 28.4% in 2004-05 to 33.4% in 2007-08. (The percentage represents those eligible for free and reduced lunch who are also receiving breakfast.)
- The Special Milk Program (SMP) is a federally funded program that provides reimbursement for milk served by schools, camps, and childcare institutions that have no other federal child nutrition program. The primary purpose is to encourage consumption of milk by children. The SMP provides reimbursement to schools and non-profit childcare institutions that offer milk to children who do not have the option to participate in any other federally supported child nutrition program such as National School Lunch and School Breakfast. Non-profit childcare institutions include summer camps, day care

centers and homeless shelters devoted to the care and training of children. Schools in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Programs may also participate in the SMP to provide milk to children in half-day pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs where children do not have access to the other school meal programs. In the SMP, the number of half pints served in FY'07 was 19,892,824.

- The Illinois Child and Adult Care Food Program is a federally funded program (through CACFP) giving financial aid to childcare providers related to the provision of meals by licensed childcare centers and day care homes. The program encourages childcare centers, outside school-hours programs, and day care homes to provide more nutritious meals to children twelve years of age and under. The objectives of the program are to improve the diets of children by providing them with nutritious, well-balanced meals and to develop good eating habits that will last into adulthood. Public or private nonprofit institutions are eligible to participate if they are licensed childcare centers (including licensed residential facilities), sponsored day care homes, infant centers, preschool centers, Head Start centers, Even Start centers, and outside-school hours care centers.
- Children regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, citizenship status, religion, age, disability, or political beliefs may be served by the Child Care Food Program, including the following: infants, preschool children, school-age children, enrollees of any age who are disabled, if the majority of enrollees are less than 19 years of age, children enrolled in after-school extended care centers, and at-risk after school children under 19 years of age.

THE NEED PERSISTS

Hunger and food insecurity in Illinois persists despite many federal, state and privately funded programs designed to address hunger, in large part due to barriers to access, a confusing array of programs, and inadequate funding. The ability to obtain enough food to sustain a healthy life is a basic human need. Yet far too many households in the region are deprived of this basic necessity, with devastating consequences.

According to *The State of Hunger in the Chicago Metropolitan Area*, a paper commissioned by the Chicago Community Trust:

“Research is beginning to show that the mental and physical changes that result from food insecurity have harmful effects on learning, development, productivity and psychological health, and family life. Food insecurity has been linked to impaired health status in children, resulting in higher illness rates. In addition, malnutrition, even at levels experienced in the United States, is related to impaired cognitive ability, lower test scores among students and psychological problems among teenagers.”¹⁵

The repercussions of hunger, food insecurity and poor nutrition that are inevitably correlated with poverty also limit the ability of a household to seize opportunities and move to exit poverty. When a family is trapped in the cycle of poverty, their access to adequate food and housing is highly likely to be insufficient. Without adequate food, they are more likely than not to remain in poverty and face food insecurity. These impacts are particularly broad and deep with children and seniors who, without adequate nutrition, will suffer greater health challenges -- at substantial individual, community and public cost. These negative repercussions, coupled with

the increasing wealth disparities between rich and poor in the United States, make addressing hunger a critically important policy priority to ensure the region's well-being.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Hunger is widely recognized as a pervasive problem in Illinois and the Chicago metropolitan area by legislators and advocates alike. While many challenges exist to eliminating hunger by 2040, the array of institutions, agencies, programs, and advocates invested as active stakeholders represent considerable resources and opportunities to overcome those barriers. The challenges to progress stem from the lack of a coordinated vision and commitment to the goal to eliminate food insecurity as evidenced in variable and often relatively low participation rates in food assistance programs, a lack of coordination among governmental and private entities administering income supports and food assistance programs, the changing landscape of food assistance, changing demographics in the region and a dearth of information regarding food insecurity in local communities in Illinois.

CHALLENGES

Low Participation in Food Assistance Programs

Despite the economic and food insecurity that many families in the region face, participation in food assistance programs is relatively low compared to the demonstrated need. For example, recent USDA data shows that of the approximately 1.5 millions Illinoisans who are eligible for SNAP, approximately only 79% were enrolled as of 2006.¹⁶ Thus, 21% of eligible households in Illinois are not taking advantage of benefits available to them.

When looking at participation rates, there are two child-focused nutrition programs that are a severely underutilized hunger fighting resource: The School Breakfast Program and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).

- Illinois currently ranks 51st amongst all states and the District of Columbia in enrollment for free and reduced priced school breakfasts. Illinois earned this bottom ranking because less than 33% of eligible children (those who receive free and reduced lunch) are also accessing School Breakfast.¹⁷
- Worse still, fewer than 17% of the eligible children who receive free and reduced lunch during the school year participate in the SFSP. In July 2007, only 58,600 children participated in SFSP, representing a decline of 36.1% over the course of a decade.

Increasing participation in these two programs could potentially serve hundreds of thousands of low-income children:

- According to a report released by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), increasing school breakfast participation in Illinois to just 60% would yield an additional \$42,655,714 in federal funds and would result in 189,668 more children receiving breakfast everyday.¹⁸

- Likewise, increasing the participation rate in the SFSP to just 40% would result in Illinois receiving over \$9.2 million in additional federal funds and in thousands of children continuing to have access to breakfast and/or lunch during the summer months. Achieving this level of participation is a short-term goal with the aim that by 2040 the participation in both programs would be above 90%.

There is clearly a disconnect between the food and nutrition programs that are available and the food insecure individuals and families that need them. The results of a 2007 study of working poor families in Cook County conducted by the Greater Chicago Food Depository further illustrate the underutilization of benefits among eligible families in the Chicago metropolitan area. Specifically, the study found that among food insecure households, 30% did not access any food assistance programs while only 22% used a food pantry.

Other findings among food insecure households that did not use a food pantry in the last year:

- 45% had at least one child enrolled in the free or reduced-price school lunch program;
- 43% had at least one household member participating in the SNAP program;
- 16% had at least one household member participating in the federal WIC program.

Inconvenient Locations and Hours of Government Offices

The 2006 Hunger Study indicated that nearly 25% of households visiting food pantries or soup kitchens had not applied for SNAP/Food Stamp Program. Of those who had not applied, more than 31% report inconvenience as a significant factor in not applying:

- With the exception of Cook County, where residents are assigned to one of 21 IDHS Family and Community Resource Centers (FCRC) based on zip code, each county in Illinois has only one local office where households apply for SNAP and other supportive programs. The Chicago zip code allocation is a convenient tool for the Department of Human Services, but it can impose challenges for potential applicants. For example, employed individuals may be eligible -- but going to the DHS local office near their work or childcare provider may be more feasible than visiting the office in their home zip code.
- Outside of Cook County, visiting the local office to apply for or renew benefits and/or for an interview may require traveling long distances.
- Finally, nearly all FCRCs are open from 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. and do not offer extended office hours. People who cannot afford to take a day off work to apply for or renew their food stamps are placed in the position of having to forfeit benefits for which they are eligible.

The challenge to the community is to reduce the logistical barriers to participation.

Time-Consuming Application and Renewal Processes for Food Assistance Programs

Applying for the SNAP/Food Stamp Program is a multi-step process. An initial application for expedited benefits can be initiated with a one-page application. However, receipt of expedited benefits does not equate to having established eligibility, as households must eventually complete the standard application process. Eligibility for subsequent months of benefits depends on a household filing a full application at the local office; this includes completing and submitting a 10-14 page application and submitting various original documents to verify eligibility. Additionally, recipients' eligibility must be re-determined anywhere from one month to one year after an application is approved, at which time the recipient must again submit a significant number of documents verifying changes, income and qualifying expenses.

Other programs such as WIC and Free and Reduced-Price Meals have somewhat simpler application processes, though they both require annual renewal and WIC requires a doctor's visit to certify pregnancy and/or nutritional risk.

Lack of Understanding of Eligibility Criteria and Stigma

The eligibility criteria for some programs can be complex and difficult to understand. Many programs treat income and deductions to determine eligibility differently. As a result, many eligible households (such as working families and caretaker relatives raising children) are unaware that they may qualify for benefits and simply do not apply. Additionally, many families are ashamed of receiving any government assistance and thus do not take advantage of programs for which they are eligible. To ensure that individuals and families access nutrition programs, there is a need for increased information and also to remove the stigma that can be associated with participation in programs such as SNAP.

Citizenship Status and Language Barriers

Many undocumented and documented immigrants are hesitant to apply for benefits on behalf of family members who are U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents, even when they may be eligible for benefits. The federal class action order in *Doe v. Coler* still prohibits agency staff from dissuading an immigrant parent from applying for his/her child and prohibits IDHS staff from reporting the individual to immigration authorities -- yet many parents are fearful the application exposes them to immigration authorities due to a feared exchange of information. This fear is exacerbated by many immigration lawyers, who incorrectly counsel their clients to avoid receiving any public benefits while in the process of applying for any legal status, residency or citizenship to avoid becoming a public charge, which is a basis to deny legal immigrant status. The advice and street wisdom is incorrect since the public charge issue only applies to households receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). The naturalization process often lasts several years; eligible families are missing out on benefits that could significantly enhance their physical and financial well-being.

The Food Stamp Act has a provision requiring that single-language minority households be served in their language to determine eligibility and to ensure that the head of household understands his/her rights and responsibilities. Moreover, Illinois is still bound to enforce this provision under the class action court order enforcing that provision, *Quinones v. Suter*. Yet IDHS often does not meet this standard due to staffing shortages and underuse of interpreters.

To successfully ensure access for all, it will be necessary to demystify the eligibility and immigration consequences, using language-appropriate means.

Impact of Food Price Increases

In 2009, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for food is expected to increase 3.0 to 4.0%; food prices already increased 5.5% between 2007 and 2008, the highest annual increase since 1990.¹⁹ This presents many challenges in ending hunger. As the prices of food and fuel have increased, families have increasingly struggled to make ends meet and put food on the table. Additionally, this trend has necessitated that the operating model for providing food assistance shift. Increased food prices and declining food donations have forced the Greater Chicago Food Depository and Northern Illinois Food Bank to purchase food to distribute to food banks, soup kitchens and shelters. For example, the Northern Illinois Food Bank increased the quantity of food it purchased by 43% between 2006 and 2008 to compensate for decreasing government commodities and private donations and the increasing demand experienced by their member agencies.

Serving Individuals Re-entering The Community From Prison

As of 2005, more than 45,000 people in Illinois were in prison.²⁰ Upon release, many persons with criminal records encounter problems securing employment because they lack job skills and networks of formal employment contacts, and they face many employers who refuse to hire individuals with criminal records. Additionally, because many services are unavailable to adults without a dependent child, they assume they are not eligible for supportive programs. Thus, many who return to the community from prison are unaware of the social services for which they may be eligible, including nutrition assistance. This lack of awareness increases food insecurity and also may contribute to recidivism, as the unemployed individual with no resources or supports faces seemingly impossible odds.

Reentry efforts to increase public safety and decrease recidivism are being undertaken at many levels to provide social service information to individuals upon their release and to orient them to available supports as part of workforce programs and through probation/parole officers. In the coming years, the community must work to increase the success in applying for and receiving income supports by those reentering the community from prison.

Changing Demographics of the Region

The changing demographics of the Chicago metropolitan area have shifted the scope and the location of poverty and hunger. The Census Bureau confirms the large population growth in the seven-county CMAP region between 1990 and 2000, with much of this growth occurring among low-income families. According to an April 2008 report released by Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights, poverty in the collar counties has “increased at nearly double the rate of population growth since 1980. More than 180,000 people in the collar counties have their opportunities restricted by poverty.”²¹ This significantly shifts the areas of need in the region from a concentrated inner-city population to an increasingly disparate suburban and ex-urban population (see Table 2).

While immigrants were primarily concentrated in the inner city for the last several decades, the collar counties are now experiencing unprecedented growth in their immigrant populations.

Census data shows that the number of foreign-born U.S. citizens rose by nearly 38% in the suburbs between 2000 and 2005, jumping almost 50% in DuPage County and doubling in Will and Grundy counties.²² These immigrant populations range from the working poor to immigrating professionals. Some suburban communities were not prepared to address the unique needs of new immigrants, who may face language and cultural barriers.

Table 2. Population and Poverty Growth in the CMAP 7-county region²³

County	Population Growth 1990-2000	Poverty Growth 1990-2000
Cook	5.21%	-0.03%
DuPage	15.25%	53.54%
Kane	27.85%	24.97%
Kendall	38.40%	23.29%
Lake	26.04%	39.74%
McHenry	42.16%	48.94%
Will	41.22%	15.23%
<i>Illinois</i>	<i>8.54%</i>	<i>-2.62%</i>

Growth in the Fixed Income Senior Population

In addition to increased immigrant populations, the demographics of the Chicago metropolitan area will be greatly impacted by the aging of the baby boomers. It is estimated that the number of residents over the age of 64 in the region will more than double from 2000 to 2040, growing from 769,047 to 1,597,363. This will present new challenges to ensuring food security and providing food assistance.²⁴ For older adults, adequate nutrition is particularly important for health because of their increased vulnerability to disease and conditions that may impair functionality.²⁵ With fixed incomes, seniors are often forced to choose between paying for housing, medical expenses or food. As food is the only elastic item among their expenditures, increasing food insecurity results unless they access various food support programs.

Despite the significant need for seniors to have access to hunger relief services, alarmingly, it is estimated that less than one-third (30%) of eligible older adults participate in SNAP.²⁶ This is largely a result of the fact that many seniors' incomes deem them eligible only for the minimum SNAP benefit – \$16 per month. As a result, many seniors feel the meager monthly amount is not worth the effort required to apply for and maintain benefits over time. In addition to financial considerations, many seniors are physically unable to access benefits, since they cannot easily go to a food pantry, visit a local IDHS office, or even travel to a congregate meal site. This is further complicated by the fact that many seniors are now raising children due to parental incarceration, drug addiction or abandonment. In this case, when seniors are unaware of or unable to access food assistance programs, both seniors and children suffer as a result.

SUMMARY

Each challenge to the elimination of hunger in the Chicago metropolitan area also affords an important opportunity to develop new policies, programs and partnerships to provide sustainable food assistance to low-income households. Of course, as the goal to eliminate hunger in the region is embraced within government and the community, and efforts to end hunger are bolstered; substantial resources will be required to eliminate hunger by improving access, targeting resources, and providing more food. As outlined in the *Blueprint to End Hunger*, “while many opportunities exist to address hunger on a national and local level, the amount of resources required to end hunger will rise or fall depending on economic conditions and advances (or setbacks) in areas such as employment, work supports and overall poverty reduction.”²⁷

OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities exist in several areas to eliminate barriers preventing the region’s residents from access to quality, nutritious food. These include:

- Conducting innovative outreach
- Changing state rules and obtaining waivers of federal rules that create non-essential barriers to access or eligibility, to establish easier access to applications or to food, expand eligibility and reduce burdensome program requirements;
- Addressing food deserts;
- Launching demonstration projects to identify new mechanisms to increase access to food assistance.

EXISTING FUNDING

The USDA provides funding opportunities to expand food stamp outreach and enrollment. State agencies and community organizations can receive 50% reimbursement for allowable outreach activities through the State SNAP Outreach Plan. This funding provides opportunities to expand and sustain SNAP outreach activities and offers a platform for developing innovative strategies to connect eligible households to food assistance. Many of the recommendations that follow in this report could be tested and, if successful, implemented through USDA grant funding.

Notably, several Chicagoland organizations and agencies have undertaken initiatives to increase alignment of food assistance benefits:

- Recognizing the importance of a sustainable source of food for families, the Food Depository and the Northern Illinois Food Bank (NIFB) have recently undertaken food stamp outreach initiatives to ensure that potentially eligible individuals and families at food pantries are provided information and assistance regarding SNAP.
- The Chicago Public Schools also run the Children and Family Benefits Unit, which works to enroll Chicago families in SNAP and free or low-cost health insurance.

- Many organizations help prepare applications and fax them into the offices, or assist households to submit them electronically with the hope that Web based applications will become the future norm.

INCREASED USE OF WAIVERS

Federal waivers present significant opportunities for Illinois to reduce barriers to access for clients and simultaneously reduce burdensome verification processes for program administrators. While the 1996 welfare reform greatly expanded waiver authority in the Food Stamp Program as long as the waivers were cost-neutral, like many other states, Illinois has not fully taken advantage of the program flexibility. For example, under USDA food stamp regulations, states may determine what documentation to require households to produce to verify information in their applications and the frequency with which recipients must report household changes and reapply for benefits. States may also choose to coordinate these activities with other programs such as TANF, Medicaid, and childcare. From 1996-2001 alone, the USDA reported approving more than 1,000 administrative waivers.²⁸ Illinois could significantly expand access to SNAP by applying for federal program waivers. Some examples of this include taking advantage of the expanded simplified reporting to reduce the reporting required by households and implementation of expanded categorical eligibility to remove asset limits for households applying for SNAP.

As outlined in the *Access to Benefits and Services Report* developed by advocates and other stakeholders for IDHS and the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS), steps should be taken to align the timing of redeterminations and allow redetermination for one program to count for other related programs.²⁹ Although federal laws that govern different income support programs allow flexibility to address these issues, Illinois has not adopted any policies to increase program flexibility around determination.³⁰ This flexibility would considerably ease the burden on food assistance recipients to separately track and maintain their benefits.

EXISTING CROSS-ELIGIBILITY LINKAGES

While all school districts in the United States are mandated to automatically approve students who are enrolled in food stamps for free and reduced lunch through the National School Lunch Program, most Illinois school districts have been slow to adopt technology to assist with the process. The Chicago Public Schools is working to use data from IDHS to directly enroll students in the school lunch and breakfast programs who are receiving SNAP; this could serve as a model for other districts in the region.

PILOT/DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

The USDA can approve and fund pilot projects to expand access to food assistance programs. Often this entails granting states multiple program waivers to partner with other state agencies or community organizations to improve program access, enrollment, and retention. Perhaps the most prominent example of a demonstration project in the Chicago metropolitan area is Express Stamps, which was recently reauthorized through the first quarter of 2009. It serves as a model for innovative SNAP outreach and also establishes an important precedent for other state and social service agencies to develop innovative demonstration projects.

Case Study: Express Stamps

Express Stamps is an innovative 2-year Food Stamp/SNAP demonstration project authorized by the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service. As the majority of people visiting food pantries report that they do not receive food stamps, this outreach project seeks to determine if participation in the Food Stamp program can be increased.

Express Stamps uses simplified policies and processes to meet the needs of people where they come for emergency food. The Express Stamps project is a collaborative effort with the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), Northern Illinois Food Bank, Feeding America and IDHS. If the project is successful, Illinois' Express Stamps will serve as a model of innovative SNAP outreach for the rest of the country.

INCREASING ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY

The changing nature of technology presents an incredible opportunity to expand information about and access to food assistance programs. While in 2009 many low-income households in the Chicago metropolitan area have limited access to the Internet, it is highly likely that well before 2040 most people, regardless of age, race, or income, will have access to and knowledge of how to use technology that will increase access to information and the ability to apply for food assistance programs. Today many can access the Internet in public spaces such as public libraries. Recent legislation and proposals may help to ensure that fewer will be excluded from Internet access due to technology or price. The 2009 Economic Recovery Act includes \$7.2 billion specifically for technology; it directs instructions to the Federal Communications Commission to build a "national broadband plan to ensure that everyone in the U.S. has broadband access," thus ensuring widespread access among Americans by 2040. Closer to home, in 2006, Chicago Mayor Richard Daley proposed expansion of affordable broadband access throughout the city to reduce the digital divide.³¹ Moreover, communications analysts, like Adam Scheinfeld, believe that "on the long-term horizon, the Internet access price point may approach single digits or even zero", implying that most households will be able to afford Internet access.³²

Similarly, state agencies, local school districts and community-based organizations should have developed technology to facilitate application processes that require less time and effort on the part of the applicant and the caseworker and that ultimately accelerate access to food assistance programs. In addition to the opportunities to enhance program access, technology also provides an important vehicle for increasing knowledge and awareness of the benefits themselves, including general program information, policy or programmatic changes to existing benefits, and even direct communication with potentially eligible people who are not enrolled in programs for which they qualify. Illinois recently launched an open architecture test allowing third party providers to interface with online state systems for All Kids/medical applications. It intends to extend this to other benefit programs including SNAP. This is an important first step toward widespread, integrated use of technology in support programs.

Case Study: Georgia's Universal Pre-School Model Lessons Learned in Creating Programs to Address Major Policy Issues

As we look to address the issue of hunger in the region, lessons can be learned from major policy and program initiatives in other states. The efforts to create universal pre-school in Georgia offer some indicators of what can help to ensure success.

- ✓ **Ownership by Highest Level Stakeholders** - In 1990, one of the gubernatorial candidates, Governor Zell Miller, decided to make as a public policy issue "access to early childhood education for all 4 years olds in Georgia, which was a major plank for his campaign.
- ✓ **Universal Program** - To garner votes and public support, Governor Miller decided that the program should be universal rather than limited to a smaller population.
- ✓ **Identified Adequate and Dedicated Funding** - Since he decided to make access universal, thus elevating cost projections, he proposed the creation of the Georgia Lottery for Education. To further ensure public support for the referendum, he made a commitment that all funds would be used to supplement - not supplant - existing preschool programs.
- ✓ **Management at High Levels** – Unlike many statewide initiatives, hands-on management came directly from the Governor whose personal involvement is one of the reasons the program grew from serving a few hundred children a decade ago to the most successful pre-kindergarten effort in the nation today.
- ✓ **Ensure One-stop Children's Department** – To ensure coordination, "one stop shopping," and maximum use of resources, in March 1996, the Georgia General Assembly created the Office of School Readiness which integrated into one Department Georgia's Pre-K Program, federal nutrition programs, and some early intervention services.

Chapter Two

A NEW VISION FOR HUNGER

The following vision statement for 2040 was developed by the Hunger Advisory Committee, consistent with the GO TO 2040 regional vision for metropolitan Chicago:

- *Every person in the seven-county Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning region will have access to quality, nutritious food.*
- *No man, woman or child will be hungry.*
- *Supplemental and emergency food systems will be customer focused and provide service with dignity.*
- *There will be “no wrong door” for individuals and families in need of food assistance – meaning there will be multiple entry points for programs and services that will be client-centered as opposed to program-centered.*
- *Nutrition programs and services will be delivered collaboratively, in a streamlined, seamless fashion, regardless of whether they are federal, state, municipal or private in nature.*

Imagining 2040

To imagine how different 2040 would be from 2009 if this vision were realized, think first about the situation in 2009 in the Chicago metropolitan area for people who are struggling to make ends meet and put food on the table:

- Jim, Anita and their two children Alicia (age 11) and Joe (age 4) were getting by but Jim was recently laid off and could only find low-wage work. And Anita’s hours at work kept getting cut. Anita goes to the local food pantry, which is very busy and sometimes runs out of food so she must get there early and stand in line for more than two hours. She receives a variety of food but is not allowed to choose what food items are best for her family. While at the pantry, Anita picks up an application for the SNAP program, completes it to the best of her ability and mails it in. She doesn’t receive a response to her application within a month and can’t get through when she calls the office to inquire. She finally decides to take a day off work to go to the local IDHS office to check in on the status of her application. There is an office across the street from where she works but she needs to go to the one closest to home.

Anita also applies for WIC but has to go to a different location and through a different process to do this. She is required to provide all the same verification documents again. After the family was approved for SNAP, their school-aged child was enrolled in a free/reduced lunch program but unfortunately school breakfast is not available at her school. When Anita goes grocery shopping and uses their SNAP benefits, she wishes she could get more fresh produce but there isn’t a store nearby that offers quality produce at an affordable cost. When she has time, Anita takes the bus to another area that has a better grocery store. During the summer, when Alicia is out of school, it’s even harder to

put food on the table and unfortunately there isn't a summer feeding site nearby for Alicia and Joe to attend. Five months after Anita was approved for SNAP benefits, she receives a letter from the state indicating that she needs to reapply to keep her benefits. However, her child becomes sick and Anita cannot make the arduous trip to the local office. Her SNAP benefits are discontinued.

- Bess is a 74 year old woman who lives alone and depends on Social Security for her income. Although she has paid off her mortgage, Bess often must choose between paying for her prescriptions and buying groceries, so she often visits nearby food pantries to supplement her diet. When a neighbor tells her that she might qualify for SNAP, Bess tries to contact the IDHS office by phone, but is not able to speak to anyone in person. The voice mail at the local office directs Bess to apply for benefits online, but Bess does not have a computer and, moreover, would prefer to speak to someone in person. Bess relies on public transportation and does not want to take the bus to the nearest local office, which is several miles from her home.

The next time she visits the food pantry, a representative assists her with completing and submitting a SNAP application. However, while Bess requested a phone interview, she receives a letter two weeks later requesting that she visit the local office for an in-person interview. Recognizing the potential benefit of receiving SNAP, Bess makes the trip to the office for the interview and has to wait several hours for the process to be completed. A week later, she receives notice that she is eligible for \$16 a month. After two months of receiving benefits, Bess loses her electronic LINK card for nutrition benefits. Rather than requesting a replacement LINK card, Bess decides it is not worth the trouble for so little money, especially since there are not any grocery stores within walking distance from her house. She decides to rely on the food pantry rather than continue to receive SNAP.

Now imagine these same situations in 2040.

- The experience could begin with Anita visiting a neighborhood food pantry located at her child's school. It is open during the late afternoon and evening with a minimal line or wait, and she is able to select food items that work best for her family. The family also receives produce credits on their "universal ID smart card" here that they can use at the local grocery store or farmers market near their home. The grocery store near them is medium-sized but offers a good selection of food and makes it easy for the family to use their produce credits. While at the grocery store Anita is told about SNAP at the checkout counter and is then directed to a kiosk where she is able to quickly complete and submit one online application for a variety of programs including SNAP, WIC (for Joe, age 4), School Lunch and Breakfast, Medicaid, and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

Anita and Jim would then be able to check the status of their application online at home and also schedule a time to do an interview over the phone during evening hours to process the family's applications for income supports. The family would need to submit minimal documentation -- only once -- as government agencies could quickly share payroll data, disability status, family relationship, residence verification through utility bills and would retain source documents that would not change (such as birth certificates). Alicia was able to enroll in free/reduced breakfast and lunch -- both available at her school as part of the regular school day. The family would also be

automatically enrolled in school meal programs and after-school and summer feeding programs available to Alicia and Joe as a result of their enrollment in SNAP. Rather than renew eligibility for SNAP every three to six months, eligibility is redetermined annually through data exchanges between necessary government agencies (Social Security, Employment Services, etc) and does not require a visit by Anita to the local office.

- In 2040, Bess, like everyone her age, has a computer and Internet at home. When her neighbor tells her about a SNAP promotion she heard on the radio, Bess applies online, at home. The next day, Bess receives an e-mail alerting her to her potential eligibility for SNAP and several other income support programs, based on her application and the information in her electronic government record, which contains information about her income, housing expenses, tax bills, and Medicare bills. After completing a phone interview with a case manager, Bess is approved for SNAP as well as programs to assist with her medical expenses. The case manager also refers her to nearby congregate meal sites where she can have meals with other people in her community.

Eleven months after she is initially approved, Bess receives an e-mail stating that her eligibility for all the benefits she receives is being redetermined based on her electronic government record. While the redetermination does not require any action on her part, Bess can contact her case manager if she has any questions or concerns. Bess has a hard time getting around but thankfully she can use her SNAP benefits to purchase groceries through a grocery delivery service that will waive the delivery charge for the elderly and disabled.

Chapter Three

RECOMMENDATIONS

This vision can be achieved if the following recommendations are implemented:

Participation

Objective: Increase participation in and access to federal nutrition assistance programs

1. Establish Universal School Breakfast programs across the region.
2. Establish a pilot program to increase older adults' participation in SNAP.
3. Increase availability of after-school, summer, and weekend nutrition sites and programs for children.
4. Increase public-private partnerships around benefits screening and enrollment.
5. Allow all legal immigrants and all children to receive benefits through all food assistance programs.

Action framework

Objective: Establish a framework to ensure recommendations are acted upon and achieved by 2040

6. Establish a statewide Anti-Hunger Commission to review progress and ensure cross-collaboration among government entities and community partners – this will be essential to maintain momentum and ensure accountability in this endeavor.
7. Appoint a high-level statewide official (ideally a member of the Governor's leadership team) to oversee anti-hunger efforts.
8. Convene key stakeholders annually, with quarterly updates as needed, to identify more detailed solutions.

Statewide system

Objective: Transform the human services system to develop a statewide system that builds programs and their delivery around the needs of individuals and families

9. Support the Health and Human Services Framework project.
10. Create better alignment of government entities providing nutrition programs and services.
11. Establish a universal ID/smart card to help streamline delivery of both government and private programs.

12. Maximize the use of technology by agencies delivering nutrition programs and services.
13. Create opportunities to meet customers where they naturally gather.
14. Establish equality of program services and delivery across the region and the state.
15. Reduce face-to-face meetings and interviews to apply and maintain participation in programs.
16. Expand flexibility of how services are provided.
17. Provide quality language assistance.
18. Develop simplified application and renewal processes.
19. Align government data systems and replace paper-based documentation systems with electronic.
20. Stagger the distribution of SNAP benefits to better serve consumers.

Charitable distribution network

Objective: Strengthen the charitable food distribution network and develop alternate methods of delivering food assistance in underserved areas

21. Develop food pantries or food assistance programs where families and individuals naturally gather.
22. Develop “super pantries” that connect people with comprehensive services.
23. Expand mobile food pantry programs.
24. Develop delivery systems to reach all those in need.

Funding

25. Maintain and increase funding for vital hunger relief programs through federal, state, and private funding.

Metrics

26. Create a regional food security measurement to track presence of hunger in the region.

Outreach

27. Develop a comprehensive public outreach plan that educates consumers about the full range of nutrition programs available.

28. Employ strategic social marketing to reframe anti-hunger and nutrition programs to overcome any associated stigma.

Retailers

29. Increase access to food retailers that offer quality, nutritious food in underserved areas.

Partnerships

30. Increase partnerships between hunger-relief and local/urban agriculture efforts.

OBJECTIVES, ACTION PLANS AND STRATEGIES

Taken together, these recommendations represent a strong, innovative, strategic and collaborative response to hunger. These are difficult times. And yet, despite a “perfect storm” of high food prices, high unemployment, budget deficits, low wages and long distances between grocery retailers, we believe that we are faced with an unprecedented opportunity to realign programs in such a way to put the “customer” at the center, to create bold new public/private partnerships that leverage off of each sector while providing a maximum community benefit efficiently. The opportunity to act boldly and demonstrate our commitment to providing food to those in need, at a time when it is most needed, is upon us.

Participation

Objective: Increase participation in and access to federal nutrition assistance programs

The nutrition assistance programs currently administered by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service form a nationwide safety net that can assist low-income families and individuals in their efforts to escape food insecurity and hunger. Currently, many of these vital programs are underutilized in Illinois (and other states across the country), resulting in increased hunger and the loss of valuable Federal dollars to the region and the state. The SNAP/Food Stamp Program provides assistance to more than 1 million individuals in Illinois, yet only 79% of eligible households are reached leaving millions of federal food assistance dollars on the table each year. The School Breakfast Program and the Summer Food Service Program are strikingly underutilized in Illinois leaving thousands of children hungry.

RECOMMENDATION ONE: UNIVERSAL SCHOOL BREAKFASTS

Recommendation: Establish Universal School Breakfast programs across the region.

Research shows that children who eat breakfast perform better in school, including improved math and reading scores and overall cognition. According to the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), school breakfast provides students with one-quarter of their daily

Case Study: Universal School Breakfast

Implementation and Outcomes in Three Major U.S. Cities

While universal school breakfast is still relatively uncommon, several major U.S. cities have undertaken initiatives to address the low participation rates in school breakfast by developing innovative programs that help students and families overcome the barriers to school breakfast participation.

Houston Independent School District: “First Class” Breakfast

- ✓ Students have the option of eating their breakfast at their desks rather than going to the cafeteria to get it. Meals are free to all students.
- ✓ Breakfast participation increased 150 percent once First Class Breakfast was offered.
- ✓ Meals are served before the school day begins, which means that teachers do not have to maintain a roster of participating students. Food Service attendants serve and clean up the food.

Los Angeles Unified School District: Second Chance Breakfast

- ✓ Addresses barriers to participation such as before-school activities and late bus schedules.
- ✓ Allows for a second breakfast service during morning recess or snack break, usually sometime between 9 and 10 a.m. Students who are not able to participate in the breakfast service before school starts are able to obtain a healthy morning meal during this period.
- ✓ The second breakfast service is generally the same meal served during the earlier cafeteria breakfast.
- ✓ This program has proven to be an excellent strategy for making sure that every student has an opportunity to eat a healthy breakfast at school, and is particularly effective with adolescents, who are less likely to eat breakfast before school.

Newark Public Schools: Breakfast in the Classroom

- ✓ Children eat breakfast during the first 10 minutes of class, while teachers take care of attendance and other classroom administrative tasks.
- ✓ In elementary schools, older students help distribute the breakfast to younger students by delivering classroom bins from the cafeteria to the classrooms. These students also help by returning the meal count daily attendance sheet to the cafeteria, earning service credit as classroom monitors. Teachers have not had to adjust schedules and have found that the program does not interfere with their instruction time.
- ✓ Breakfast menus include both hot and cold breakfast items.
- ✓ School officials estimate that a \$12,500 initial investment was required for administrative costs, including the purchase of additional plastic bins and lids needed for the classrooms.

recommended levels for key nutrients that growing children need. Despite the proven benefits, however, many children do not eat breakfast before school; the School Breakfast Program can help fill this gap. However, many students do not take advantage of school breakfast, which often requires them to arrive as early as forty-five minutes before the school day begins. To address this barrier and to confer the many benefits of school breakfast to all students, regardless of income, many U.S. school districts have adopted universal school breakfast programs, which offer breakfast to all. Moreover, many universal school breakfast programs provide breakfast in the classroom when school starts in the morning, rather than in the cafeteria before school starts, which makes it easier for children to participate.

According to FRAC, “schools that provide universal breakfast in the classroom report decreases in discipline and psychological problems, visits to school nurses and tardiness; increases in student attentiveness and attendance; and generally improved learning environments.” In addition to the health and education benefits, aside from administrative costs, universal school breakfast programs are most often budget neutral for school districts since they are entirely funded by the USDA. Specifically, the average school breakfast costs \$0.70 while reimbursement ranges from \$1.40 per meal to \$1.68 for “severe need” districts. School districts in the seven-county Chicago area should investigate and ultimately implement universal school breakfast programs tailored to their own student populations.

RECOMMENDATION TWO: FOOD STAMPS FOR OLDER ADULTS

Recommendation: Establish a pilot program to increase older adults’ participation in SNAP.

Many older adults do not access SNAP because they often only qualify for only the minimum benefit. This is often due to the formula that is used to calculate a household’s food stamp benefit. The current formula provides a 20% earned income deduction for “earned income,” or income from work, but not for households with “unearned income,” such as Social Security. To reach more seniors, the state should create a demonstration project that provides a 20% deduction in income counted for those 60 and older. This will provide older adults with greater access to much needed high-quality, nutritious food. Additionally, as we work to increase the participation of eligible households (particularly seniors) in SNAP, allowing SNAP recipients to access food through home delivery is something that will need to be addressed, as the current rules and regulations do not allow for this to occur.

RECOMMENDATION THREE: NON-SCHOOL-HOURS PROGRAMS

Recommendation: Increase availability of after-school, summer, and weekend nutrition sites and programs for children.

For too many children, access to complete nutritious meals is limited to what children receive at school. This leaves evenings, weekends and summer vacations where children may be lacking adequate nutrition. To ensure that children have consistent access to the food they need to grow and learn, the region must invest in increasing the number of child nutrition sites and programs available. In some instances, progress in this area can be accomplished with small start-up grants for nonprofit sites wanting to establish a Summer Food Service Program, but in other cases, participation by cities and municipalities may be needed to create a significant impact.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR: PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Recommendation: Increase public-private partnerships around benefits screening and enrollment.

Recognizing that many people would prefer to visit community providers with whom they are familiar rather than often daunting government offices, programs that encourage innovative community-based enrollment should be expanded. Examples of current initiatives include the Express Stamps Demonstration Project, in which volunteers from NIFB assist food pantry clients with completing food stamp applications and determine eligibility for the first month of benefits. The Illinois Food Stamp Outreach Plan also allows private organizations to undertake food stamp outreach and enrollment activities in their communities; they can receive 50% reimbursement for allowable outreach activities. Fostering creative programs and collaborations can help facilitate enrollment in food assistance programs.

Case Study: DuPage County Benefits Specialists Coordinating Resources for Low-Income Families

The DuPage Federation collaborates with the DuPage County Department of Public Health to assist residents with accessing income support programs. The DuPage Federation trains Public Health employees, called Benefits Specialists, to help people apply for income supports for which they may be eligible, including All Kids and Family Care, SNAP, WIC, and others. Importantly, Benefits Specialists are not restricted to serving patients only. Rather, DuPage residents can go to one of the seven health department locations specifically to apply for income supports. Efforts to improve access to services are imperative since Illinois counties outside of Cook have only one IDHS Family and Community Resource Center which are often far from peoples' home and very difficult to access by public transportation. This effort is a great example of how partnerships between the public and private sector can increase access to and enrollment in a variety of programs.

RECOMMENDATION FIVE: ASSISTANCE FOR LEGAL IMMIGRANTS AND ALL CHILDREN

Recommendation: Allow all legal immigrants and all children to receive benefits through all food assistance programs.

Many legal immigrants in the U.S. and the region are not allowed to access essential food support programs such as SNAP until they have been in the U.S. for five years. Undocumented children are not eligible for all food and nutrition programs but are eligible for childcare subsidies and to enroll in public school for participation. This presents a significant barrier to ensuring access for all and should be changed. Additionally, targeted education and outreach to this population is essential to make sure they understand program rules and how to access various supports.

Action framework

Objective: Establish a framework to ensure recommendations are acted upon and achieved by 2040.

RECOMMENDATION SIX: STATEWIDE ANTI-HUNGER COMMISSION

Recommendation: Establish a statewide Anti-Hunger Commission to review progress and ensure cross-collaboration among government entities and community partners. This will be essential to maintain momentum and ensure accountability in this endeavor.

To monitor progress toward the recommendations and vision outlined in this document, there will need to be a standing group of advisors that meets to review progress and direct next steps as appropriate. The group would monitor food programs and food security issues and stay focused on influencing positive change toward access for all. Additionally, the Task Force would help facilitate the creation of a Division of Food and Nutrition Services within IDHS (detailed proposal below). Once this division was established, division staff could provide staffing support to the task force and the task force could provide recommendations to the Division. The task force should be comprised of providers, advocates, and partners (including donors and companies that support hunger relief) from throughout the state. To ensure longevity in this effort, the task force should be legislatively mandated through action of the Illinois General Assembly.

Case Study: Illinois Housing Task Force Ensuring action and progress

In 2006 the Illinois legislature passed the Comprehensive Housing Planning Act (CHPA), which establishes a permanent commitment to create and preserve affordable housing across the state by coordinating the efforts of state agencies providing housing programs such as the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) and the Departments of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Human Services, Aging, Veterans' Affairs, and Healthcare and Family Services. This model can be easily and effectively adapted to address hunger. Key components and duties of the Hunger Task Force include:

- ✓ **Funding:** Identify all funding sources for which the state has administrative control and develop recommendations for future funding;
- ✓ **Institutional infrastructure:** Identify barriers to access and develop sustainable policies and programs to address them;
- ✓ **Innovation:** Promote and facilitate public-private partnerships;
- ✓ **Assessment:** Develop benchmarks and set goals to indicate success;
- ✓ **Accountability:** Report to Governor and General Assembly on annual plan and progress April 1 of each year.

RECOMMENDATION SEVEN: A NEW STATE OFFICIAL

Recommendation: Appoint a high-level statewide official (ideally a member of the governor's leadership team) to oversee anti-hunger efforts.

This individual would be charged with shepherding through key policy changes, initiatives, and processes identified by the Anti-Hunger Task Force, such as applying for waivers, helping to align program guidelines, facilitating intra-agency collaborations, and shepherding through programmatic changes. Similarly to the Georgia pre-school example provided earlier, in which much of the success of the program can be attributed to the high-level priority placed on the initiative, the senior official should be housed in the Governor's Office and report directly to the Governor's Chief of Staff.

RECOMMENDATION EIGHT: ANNUAL STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Recommendation: Convene key stakeholders annually, with quarterly updates as needed, to identify more detailed solutions.

To keep the community engaged in the work and goals outlined in this document, an annual forum to discuss issues, identify detailed solutions, and report on progress should be held. Participants in the forum will vary depending on the topic of focus.

Statewide system

Objective: Transform the human services system to develop a statewide system that builds programs and their delivery around the needs of individuals and families.

The method in which human services are delivered has changed little over the past several decades, while the number of state staff charged with connecting families and individuals with services have decreased. The human service system needs to be redesigned at the same time efforts to maximize technology are implemented. Many of the barriers facing those working to access supportive programs are systemic and can be improved.

RECOMMENDATION NINE: A NEW FRAMEWORK

Recommendation: Support the Health and Human Services Framework project.

The Health and Human Services Framework is a multi-year, comprehensive project designed to develop and implement an enterprise system to support data sharing and efficient delivery of programs and services across social services agencies. Presently, 25-year old information systems are supporting health and human service programs. These systems exist in virtual information silos. Consequently, integration of service delivery is difficult and Illinois residents have to wait in multiple lines or visit multiple offices to apply for services. Through the use of call centers, online applications, automated eligibility determination, and Internet-based case

management tools, the framework will improve the way Illinois delivers human services and health care.

RECOMMENDATION TEN: BETTER ALIGNMENT

Recommendation: Create better alignment of government entities providing nutrition programs and services.

Currently many of the most impactful nutrition programs serving individuals and families are operated within different divisions of IDHS and some are operated by other departments, such as the Illinois State Board of Education. To help ensure a stronger collaboration on anti-hunger initiatives and to achieve many of the goals outlined in this document, we recommend exploring opportunities to create better coordination and alignment in delivering these vital programs. One idea developed by the committee is to create an entity or division that is focused on the issue of food and nutrition that would bring all food and nutrition programs currently administered by DHS under one umbrella. Recognizing that reorganization presents its own challenges and can often create other schisms, this would need to be examined carefully to ensure the desired impact. If programs are to remain housed in the current structure, then perhaps a senior official or staff unit could be charged with ensuring collaboration among the various state agencies working on nutrition issues.

RECOMMENDATION ELEVEN: UNIVERSAL ID CARD

Recommendation: Establish a universal ID/smart card to help streamline delivery of both government and private programs.

A multi-functional card for all public benefits recipients will significantly reduce barriers to access for eligible and enrolled families. In addition to its function as an identification card and driver's license, a universal ID card would serve as a delivery mechanism for food stamps and TANF, an annual health insurance card for Medicaid / SCHIP (State Children's Health Insurance Program) recipients, and an eligibility card for WIC and other anti-hunger benefits. A single card for several programs would significantly reduce program stigma by delivering benefits through a vehicle common to recipients and non-recipients. Additionally, this ID card could have information embedded in it that would allow for other providers to quickly determine eligibility for programs and services.

RECOMMENDATION TWELVE: MAXIMIZE TECHNOLOGY

Recommendation: Maximize the use of technology by agencies delivering nutrition programs and services.

While many low-income families and individuals do not have regular access to technology such as computers and the Internet, it is almost a foregone conclusion that as technology develops and becomes less expensive, it will become increasingly accessible to all. Therefore, it is not unrealistic to assume that technological approaches to addressing hunger will be effective for low-income households. In fact, technology can greatly enhance access to benefits through improved social marketing strategies, online applications, and virtual case management. As technology is increasingly employed, it is important that issues of accessibility for individuals

with a disability are taken into consideration and that any necessary modifications or adaptations are made available.

RECOMMENDATION THIRTEEN: UTILIZE GATHERING PLACES

Recommendation: Create opportunities to meet customers where they naturally gather.

A key component of successful outreach is to meet people in their own environment. The current system requires people to visit a government office for most anti-hunger programs, which can be daunting and logistically difficult. Increased outreach at places where people naturally congregate, such as churches, schools, grocery stores, and community organizations, can greatly increase the visibility of anti-hunger programs, improve consumer education regarding eligibility criteria, and improve access to the application and redetermination process. Partnerships with grocery stores and other commercial locations should also be explored for efficacy in reaching those in need of food assistance.

RECOMMENDATION FOURTEEN: EQUALITY OF SERVICES AND ACCESS

Recommendation: Establish equality of program services and delivery across the region and the state.

Access to anti-hunger programs should not be solely determined by where an individual or family lives. Improved technology can reduce the need for physical access points for households to apply for benefits through facilitating application for benefits online at peoples' homes or at various places within communities. Additionally, community-based public/private partnerships can facilitate better access to services, regardless of location. We must ensure that anti-hunger programs are available across the region and that service is not diminished for those living in less populated areas. One example of a program that is geographically limited is the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, which is currently available only to residents of Cook County. Efforts must be made to expand this program across the region and, if possible, across the state.

RECOMMENDATION FIFTEEN: LIMITED MEETINGS AND INTERVIEWS

Recommendation: Reduce face-to-face meetings and interviews to apply and maintain participation in programs.

While waivers of face-to-face interviews are available to food stamp applicants who work during the day or have problems related to transportation or childcare, the option is not widely employed by applicants or widely accepted by FCRCs, often deterring eligible households from applying due to the burden of visiting the local office. This is especially true for people in the collar counties, where there is only one FCRC per county and where public transportation is often less accessible. Illinois can take advantage of the recent lift on the cap by USDA to further reduce face-to-face initial interviews and redeterminations and can incentivize caseworkers to honor applicants' requests for phone interviews. Caseworkers often cite fear of increasing the error rate for their unwillingness to interview applicants over the phone. This fear could be ameliorated by building better technical infrastructure at the state level to enhance electronic eligibility verification through the Illinois Department of Employment Services, the Social

Security Administration and other relevant agencies and to allow people to submit applications and verification documentation electronically.

RECOMMENDATION SIXTEEN: FLEXIBLE SERVICE DELIVERY

Recommendation: Expand flexibility of how services are provided.

With the exception of Cook County, where residents are assigned to one of 21 centers based on zip code, each county in Illinois has only one food stamp office. Thus, many eligible people are deterred from applying for benefits due to the long distances they must travel to apply and/or renew benefits. Moreover, most offices are open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and do not offer extended hours. Many people cannot afford to take a day off work to apply for or renew their food stamps and thus forfeit the benefits for which they are eligible. IDHS should implement a policy allowing applicants to submit and process their applications at any office regardless of home address. IDHS should also allow recipients to maintain their cases at whatever office they prefer, rather than assigning them by home zip code or county. IDHS should increase the number of satellite offices in collar counties and/or consider partnering with community-based organizations to assist food stamp recipients with regular maintenance of their case.

RECOMMENDATION SEVENTEEN: LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE.

Recommendation: Provide quality language assistance.

In 2040 no one in need of public services, especially those related to an issue as fundamental as hunger, should face a language barrier. The language capacity of food stamp office staff should better reflect the composition of the population it serves so that, for example, no client who prefers to interact with a caseworker in Spanish is assigned to an English speaker due to a lack of appropriate staffing. Moreover, the state should invest in software or similar language technology to increase language capacity to accommodate clients equally, regardless of language preference. Partnerships with community entities such as the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights can also help ensure that quality language assistance is available to those who need it.

RECOMMENDATION EIGHTEEN: SIMPLIFIED APPLICATIONS AND RENEWALS

Recommendation: Develop simplified application and renewal processes.

There are significant opportunities for Illinois to streamline and integrate program rules and requirements for income support and nutrition programs, which would ideally culminate in a single application through which eligibility for any public program could be determined. Most programs now require separate applications gathering similar eligibility information.³³ Similarly, benefits renewal can occur on the same schedule, using the same application. Additionally, different approval periods and redetermination requirements often lead to confusion, missed deadlines, and discontinuation of benefits. Aligning eligibility redetermination across programs - in terms of timeframe, eligibility information and verification documentation -- will significantly improve continuity of benefits for eligible households. State agencies should work to use existing electronic data to implement automated renewal, based on tax data, participation in

other public benefits and state employment data to automatically renew families in food assistance programs.

RECOMMENDATION NINETEEN: ALIGN DATA SYSTEMS

Recommendation: Align government data systems and replace paper-based documentation systems with electronic.

Better alignment of government databases will reduce the burden for caseworkers and families and allow for cross-referencing of enrollment and eligibility for other programs. Data alignment could include information from the Illinois Department of Human Services, Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, Illinois Department of Employment Services, Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois Department of Child and Family Services, the Illinois Department of Corrections, and the Social Security Administration.

These shared data systems should be programmed to evaluate household eligibility for a variety of programs and automatically generate applications for programs in which a potentially eligible household is not enrolled. For example, when a household's Unemployment Insurance is terminated, the system should automatically generate an application for the Food Stamp Program, and, if there is a child in the home under 5 years of age, an application for the WIC program. A centralized electronic system where verification documents are maintained would increase efficiency and allow departments to more easily collaborate to connect families and individuals with programs. This would also entail electronic submission of verification for clients and third party providers. Such a system will greatly reduce the burden of transferring cases and information across space and organizations and will improve program integrity.

RECOMMENDATION TWENTY: STAGGERED DISTRIBUTION OF BENEFITS

Recommendation: Stagger the distribution of SNAP benefits to better serve consumers.

Currently, 70% of all households receive their SNAP benefits on the first of the month. As a result, grocery stores can see a tremendous rush at the beginning of the month. This has led to many issues, including an inability of consumers to access fresh fruits and vegetables throughout the month because of inventory management challenges associated with the rush. Additionally, some grocers have had difficulty providing adequate hours for their workers throughout the month due to the rush at the beginning of the month and lull toward the end, making some retailers hesitant to move into food deserts because of this challenge.

Finally, some food pantries face similar challenges in serving consumers well throughout the month, with tremendously increased demand at the end of the month when most families have exhausted their monthly SNAP benefits.

To ensure a better shopping experience for SNAP consumers, IDHS should implement a plan that would better stagger food stamp issuances throughout the month. This should be accomplished without requiring food stamp families to "stretch" a monthly allotment for more than 30 days, without imposing any added administrative burden on caseworkers, and in strict compliance with federal statutes and regulations.

Charitable distribution network

Objective: Strengthen the charitable food distribution network and develop alternate methods of delivering food assistance in underserved areas.

RECOMMENDATION TWENTY-ONE: PROGRAMS WHERE PEOPLE GATHER

Recommendation: Develop food pantries or food assistance programs where families and individuals naturally gather.

As the charitable food networks works to be more customer-focused, we must increasingly look to develop food assistance sites in locations that families and individuals already gather and visit. Public schools and senior housing sites are two examples of locations where pantries would be most convenient for individuals and families needing food assistance. Some efforts like this are underway and should be expanded and continued.

RECOMMENDATION TWENTY-TWO: SUPER PANTRIES

Recommendation: Develop “super pantries” that connect people with comprehensive services.

The individuals who visit pantries for groceries often have other challenges and needs, whether it be for a health screening, help completing a job application, or a referral to get eyeglasses for a child. There is a tremendous untapped opportunity to reach those in need as they access food assistance. All pantries would need to be equipped to supply information and/or assistance that will connect individuals to local, state, and federal programs for which they qualify. In the coming years, access to technology should assist with achieving this goal, but there may need to be investments to ensure that community organizations have access to the technology needed. Additionally, in some communities in the region, there are many small pantries that operate within blocks of each other with small budgets and meager resources. However, if 5-10 small pantries combined their collective resources to focus on one large “super pantry” to serve the community, their impact could be much greater.

RECOMMENDATION TWENTY-THREE: MOBILE FOOD PANTRIES

Recommendation: Expand mobile food pantry programs.

Food banks and other charitable organizations can also play a key role in the distribution of quality food to communities where healthy foods are not readily available. One program model that has been successful is the mobile pantry, a traveling food pantry that delivers food assistance directly to those in need. A box truck or refrigerated truck carries nonperishable food and can also have refrigerated bays for fresh produce, milk, fresh meats and frozen foods. This innovative system allows clients to receive food directly from the truck, thereby assisting communities without nearby food stores and/or with food pantries that lack adequate storage facilities for large quantities of food. Mobile food pantry programs can also provide an opportunity to connect households with additional resources. There is an opportunity for local IDHS offices and other service providers to host mobile pantries in their parking lots so families receiving groceries can apply for other assistance and vice versa.

Case Study: People's Resource Center Moving beyond food

The People's Resource Center of DuPage County is a great example of an organization that began as a food pantry and maintains this core mission but has expanded its reach to better meet the needs of the community. PRC offers the core services of food assistance, clothing and emergency homeless prevention assistance help people to meet their basic needs. In addition to these essential services, PRC also works to offer and connect people with additional programs to provide a pathway of opportunity to those yearning to better their lives. PRC staff and volunteers screen individuals and families for benefit eligibility and assist them with applying for benefits and also navigating the application process. Adults are provided resources to gain English language skills and basic literacy skills to make them employable in jobs with a career path. Individuals and families often enter PRC simply looking for assistance obtaining groceries and perhaps shelter but instead are able to access a comprehensive array of services that can change their lives.

RECOMMENDATION TWENTY-FOUR: STRONGER DELIVERY SYSTEMS

Recommendation: Develop delivery systems to reach all those in need.

To ensure access for all stronger delivery systems must be developed to reach households with seniors, people with disabilities, and/or other homebound populations. Delivery programs that would provide food delivery without additional cost to seniors and individuals living with disabilities should be explored. This could be part of a food pantry program, a collaborative effort of a food pantry, or a partnership with another service provider that regularly goes into the home or through partnerships with private companies such as Peapod, United Parcel Service, or others who have strong distribution networks in place.

Funding

RECOMMENDATION TWENTY-FIVE: ADEQUATE FUNDING

Recommendation: Maintain and increase funding for vital hunger relief programs through federal, state, and private funding.

In recent years, there have been some increases in federal funding levels for food and nutrition programs -- but often not enough to redress past cuts and/or the effects of inflation. To achieve the goals outlined in this report, funding for hunger-relief programs will need to be maintained and in some cases increased. Advocacy will be necessary to maintain and increase federal and state funding. Additionally, private funding that supports anti-hunger programs throughout the

region should be increased -- but targeted for maximum effectiveness. One of the greatest opportunities is to use private dollars to build infrastructure and programs that can leverage maximum participation in federal nutrition programs and other existing resources that are not being fully utilized in the community.

Metrics

RECOMMENDATION TWENTY-SIX: REGIONAL FOOD SECURITY METRICS

Recommendation: Create a regional food security measurement to track presence of hunger in the region.

There are two methods often used to monitor the presence of hunger and food insecurity in the community:

- Assessing levels of participation in various nutrition and food assistance programs, or the utilization of food pantries. While this strategy offers important insight into the number of people accessing assistance, it does not account for those who are in need but not enrolled in the various federal nutrition programs.
- Assessing food security through interviews of a random sampling of households. This measure allows for the tracking of actual need in the community and can provide a stronger basis for advocacy for additional funding and policy changes. This type of data exists at the federal and state level but not at the regional level in Illinois. The seven-county CMAP region should follow efforts of other areas, such as Palm Beach County, Florida, that have developed strategies to supplement USDA data with regional measurements.

Outreach

RECOMMENDATION TWENTY-SEVEN: MORE PUBLIC OUTREACH

Recommendation: Develop a comprehensive public outreach plan that educates consumers about the full range of nutrition programs available.

Many eligible households are unaware they may qualify for benefits or are unaware of program eligibility guidelines, some of which are difficult to understand and may have changed since welfare was reformed in 1996. To overcome this, we must increase outreach and education efforts. Illinois government agencies and community-based organizations should collaborate to develop a media outreach campaign targeted at potentially eligible families who are not enrolled in benefits and/or accessing other food assistance. Technology can be employed to achieve this goal through media campaigns and even online social networking. This marketing campaign should be directed at the most vulnerable populations, including children, seniors, and immigrants.

RECOMMENDATION TWENTY-EIGHT: REDUCED STIGMA

Recommendation: Employ strategic social marketing to reframe anti-hunger and nutrition programs to overcome any associated stigma.

Outreach efforts should employ strategic social marketing to reframe anti-hunger programs to overcome stigma. For example, the food stamp program can be marketed as a healthy foods initiative, rather than an anti-hunger program.

Retailers

RECOMMENDATION TWENTY-NINE: ACCESS TO FOOD RETAILERS

Recommendation: Increase access to food retailers that offer quality, nutritious food in underserved areas.

In addition to lacking the resources to purchase food, many people also have no source of quality food within a reasonable distance to the home. This presents a significant barrier to accessing food, even if they are able to enroll in food assistance programs. We must make concerted efforts to stimulate and support the development of quality food retailers in underserved communities. There are good efforts underway toward this goal, through the Illinois Food Marketing Task Force. The task force's recommendations should be considered and supported.

Partnerships

RECOMMENDATION THIRTY: AGRICULTURAL PARTNERSHIPS

Recommendation: Increase partnerships between hunger-relief and local/urban agriculture efforts.

As we move to 2040, we must also identify for new ways for the hunger-relief community to partner with local and urban agriculture efforts to support efforts to ensure a sustainable food supply. One example could be enhancement of programs that provide vouchers for people in need to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables. The CMAP Food System Advisory Committee report makes many recommendations for how to achieve the vision for a sustainable regional food system in the year 2040. It covers everything from how the food we eat is grown and harvested, processed and packaged, transported and marketed, to consumed and disposed. Successful implementation of new strategies to improve the overall food system will be essential to achieving the vision outlined by the Hunger Advisory Committee.

APPENDIX I. NUTRITION AND FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) <i>(formerly known as Food Stamp Program)(Farm Bill)</i>					
Federal / State / Local Agencies	FY09 Funding	Program Description	Eligibility	Application / Benefit Delivery	Participants
<p>Federal: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)</p> <p>State: Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS)</p>	\$40.3 billion	SNAP helps low-income people and families buy the food they need for good health. Benefits are provided on an electronic LINK card that is used like an ATM card and accepted at most grocery stores.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals and families • Gross monthly income at or below 130% of poverty line • Eligibility re-determined every six months for people who are working, approximately every three months for people who do not work, and annually for elderly and disabled • Citizen and limited non-citizen eligibility 	<p>Application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application sites include IDHS offices and community agencies using paper or RealBenefits applications (printed and faxed due to lack of third party interface with electronic application portal) • Web application <p>Benefit Delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LINK card benefits can be used at food stores, congregate food sites 	Households who buy food and prepare meals together, with gross income below 130% of poverty (31.7 million nationally and 1.4 million in Illinois)
Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, & Children (WIC) <i>(Child Nutrition Act)</i>					
Federal / State / Local Agencies	FY09 Funding	Program Description	Eligibility	Application / Benefit Delivery	Participants
<p>Federal: USDA</p> <p>State: Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), Division of Community Health</p>	\$6.3 billion	Illinois WIC provides nutrition education and supplemental foods to low-income families with a pregnant, breastfeeding or postpartum woman, an infant or a child less than five years of age, who also have a medical or nutritional risk factor. Participants are issued vouchers and obtain their WIC foods by redeeming them at approved grocery stores or WIC Food Centers throughout the state.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnant women • At risk children age 0-5 • Income at or below 185% poverty line • Determined to be nutritionally at-risk • Eligibility re-determined every 6-12 months • Citizens and strictly limited non-citizen eligibility 	<p>Application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WIC clinics, Federally Qualified Health Centers • Web application available to public health departments and health clinics on Cornerstone <p>Benefit Delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper coupons for benefits can be used at food stores or specialty WIC food stores (operated exclusively in Cook County by Catholic Charities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnant and post-partum women, infants and children • The WIC program serves approximately 43 % of the infants born in Illinois each year

WIC Farmers' Market Program (Child Nutrition Act)

Federal / State / Local Agencies	FY09 Funding	Program Description	Eligibility	Application / Benefit Delivery	Participants
<p>Federal: USDA</p> <p>State: IDHS, Division of Community Health</p> <p>Local: WIC Centers (operated by Catholic Charities of Chicago), Farmers markets</p>	\$19.86 million	In 2008, nine counties have been added to the program bringing the total to 33 counties statewide. Participants will be provided coupons that can be used from July 1 - October 31. Approximately 30,000 packages of fresh fruits and vegetables were purchased and distributed to WIC participants from July through September 2008 at the 18 WIC Food Centers in Chicago.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All WIC participants in participating states are eligible 	<p>Benefit Delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eligible participants are issued coupons used to buy fresh, unprepared locally grown fruits, herbs and vegetables Purchases can be made from farmers, farmers' markets or roadside stands approved by the state. The farmers, farmers' markets or roadside stands then submit the coupons to the bank or state agency for reimbursement. 	Low income women, infants, and children enrolled in the WIC program in participating states, including Illinois, where 43% all newborns in the state participate in the program.

National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
(Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act)

Federal / State / Local Agencies	FY09 Funding	Program Description	Eligibility	Application / Benefit Delivery	Participants
<p>Federal: USDA</p> <p>State: Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)</p> <p>Local: School districts</p>	\$8.47 billion	<p>NSLP is a federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day.</p> <p>School districts and independent schools that choose to take part in the lunch program get cash subsidies and donated commodities from the USDA for each meal they serve.</p> <p>In return, they must serve lunches that meet Federal requirements, and they must offer free or reduced price lunches to eligible children. School food authorities can also be reimbursed for snacks served to children through age 18 in afterschool educational or enrichment programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School-aged children in attendance at participating schools Free: Income at or below 130% of poverty Line Reduced: Income at or below 185% of poverty line Re-determined annually 	<p>Application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed at schools, students enrolled in food stamps are automatically approved through state letters and/or data exchange <p>Benefit Delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meals served during school day 	Children attending school

School Breakfast Program (SBP) (Child Nutrition Act)					
Federal/State/Local Agencies	FY 09 Funding	Program Description	Eligibility	Application / Benefit Delivery	Participants
Federal: USDA State: ISBE Local: School districts; residential childcare institutions	\$2.63 billion	The School Breakfast Program is a federal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. School districts and independent schools that choose to take part in the breakfast program receive cash subsidies from USDA for each meal they serve. In return, they must serve breakfasts that meet federal requirements, and they must offer free or reduced price breakfast to eligible children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School-aged children in attendance at participating schools Free: Income at or below 130% of poverty Line Reduced: Income at or below 185% of poverty line Re-determined annually 	Application <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applications completed at local schools or district office or other providers No formal application: either short paper application or reliance on NSLP eligibility Benefit Delivery Meals provided at school during the school year	Children attending school or living in a residential childcare institution

Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) (Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act)					
Federal / State/ Local Agencies	FY09 Funding	Program Description	Eligibility	Application / Benefit Delivery	Participants
Federal: USDA State: ISBE Local: School districts, Chicago Department of Family Support Services and community agencies	\$358 million	SFSP provides nutritious meals and snacks to children in low-income areas during the summer months and long vacation periods for schools on year-round schedules. Sponsors, such as schools, local government agencies, playgrounds, residential and non-residential camps, faith-based organizations or private nonprofit organizations are reimbursed for meals served to enrolled children at eligible sites.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School-age children Area eligibility determined each summer: school nearest site must have at least 50% of students enrolled in NSLP Individual eligibility can be established following the same guidelines as CACFP 	Application <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No application required unless site is establishing individual eligibility (as opposed to area eligibility) Benefit Delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meals must be consumed onsite as part of the congregate meal program 	Children under 18 (or people with disability over 18 who participate in school programs) in low-income areas

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (Child Nutrition Act / Farm Bill)

Federal / State / Local Agencies	FY09 Funding	Program Description	Eligibility	Application/Benefit Delivery	Participants
Federal: USDA State: ISBE Local: School districts	\$40 million (significant increase in 2008 Farm Bill)	The program supplies fresh fruit and vegetables directly to schools and offers a wider variety of fresh produce than would normally be available through USDA purchases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on school eligibility: elementary schools that are at least 50% free/reduced lunch Priority given to schools with the highest percentages of low-income students 	Application <ul style="list-style-type: none"> None. Benefit delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fruits and vegetables are consumed at school outside of reimbursed meals 	Children at elementary schools selected to participate in the program

Child & Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) (Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act)

Federal/State/ Local Agencies	FY09 Funding	Program Description	Eligibility	Application/Benefit Delivery	Participants
Federal: USDA State: ISBE, IDHS Local: Licensed childcare providers, afterschool programs and other community agencies	\$2.5 billion	CACFP provides nutritious meals and snacks to children in day care and adults in nonresidential adult day care centers. CACFP also provides meals to children residing in emergency shelters, and snacks to youths participating in afterschool care programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children age 0-12 Attendance at program Household eligibility dependent on income and reimbursement rate to agency depends on whether household is classified as free (130% poverty), reduced (185% poverty), or paid (over 185% poverty) Eligibility re-determined annually or as child changes enrollment Citizens and non-citizens are eligible 	Application: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childcare providers (private, nonprofit and community-based) Child residential programs Child welfare programs No Web application Benefit Delivery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meals are provided onsite 	Low income children attending child care centers, family child care homes, after school programs, homeless shelters, institutions & adults in adult day care

Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) (Farm Bill Title IV)

Federal / State / Local Agencies	FY09 Funding	Program Description	Eligibility	Application/Benefit Delivery	Participants
<p>Federal: USDA</p> <p>State: IDHS</p> <p>Local: Administered by Catholic Charities and partner agencies</p>	\$160.4 million	CSFP works to improve the health of low-income pregnant and breastfeeding women, other new mothers up to one year postpartum, infants, children up to age six, and elderly people at least 60 years of age by supplementing their diets with nutritious USDA commodity foods. It provides food and administrative funds to states to supplement the diets of these groups. USDA purchases food and makes it available to state agencies and Indian Tribal Organizations along with funds for administrative costs. Local agencies determine eligibility of applicants, distribute the foods, and provide nutrition education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elderly persons at least 60 years of age living at or below 185% of poverty Low-income pregnant and breastfeeding women, other new mothers up to one year postpartum, infants, children 0-5 (185% of poverty) Currently only offered in Cook County 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Also known as the Mother and Child Nutrition Program (MAC) locally Food boxes are distributed through local agencies and eligibility for program is determined by agency 	<p>Primarily low-income elderly (90% of participants) and low-income pregnant and breastfeeding women, new mothers, infants, children</p> <p>The average monthly caseload for CSFP in Illinois is approximately 15,000.</p>

Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) (Farm Bill Title IV)

Federal/State/Local Agencies	FY09 Funding	Program Description	Eligibility	Application/Benefit Delivery	Participants
<p>Federal: USDA</p> <p>State: IDHS</p>	\$16 million	SFMNP awards grants to States, U.S. territories, and federally-recognized Indian tribal governments to provide low-income seniors with coupons that can be exchanged for eligible foods at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low-income seniors (over 60) with incomes not more than 185% of the poverty line 	<p>Application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some State agencies accept proof of participation or enrollment in another means-tested program, such as the Commodity Supplemental Food Program or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, for SFMNP eligibility. <p>Benefit Delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coupons are issued to participants to purchase fresh, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables, and herbs at authorized farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low-income seniors: at least 60 years old with household incomes of below 185% of poverty

Home-Delivered Meals Program (Older Americans' Act Title III)					
Federal/State/Local Agencies	FY09 Funding	Program Description	Eligibility	Application/Benefit Delivery	Participants
<p>Federal: US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) – Administration on Aging (AoA)</p> <p>State: Illinois Department on Aging</p> <p>Local: Chicago DFSS, Age Options, NEIL (Northeastern Illinois Area Agency on Agency)</p>	\$32 million	Often referred to as Meals on Wheels, this program provides home delivered meals to older adults who cannot leave their homes and cannot personally prepare nutritious meals. Volunteers who deliver meals to homebound older persons have an important opportunity to check on the welfare of the homebound elderly and are encouraged to report any health or other problems they may observe during their visits. Meals served must provide at least one-third of the daily recommended dietary allowances established by the Food and Nutrition Board of the National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council. The program also provides a range of related services including nutrition screening, assessment, education and counseling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals age 60 and above Homebound and unable to prepare meals for self Lack of support system to assist with meal preparation 	<p>Application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial referral via phone to local agencies Case manager conducts assessment to determine eligibility <p>Benefit Delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides meals delivered to people's homes. Frequency of meals varies by area There is a suggested donation as with all Older American's Act programs (can use SNAP benefits) 	<p>Seniors over 60 years are eligible.</p> <p>There are no income guidelines, although program is focused on low-income and minority seniors.</p> <p>Spouses of seniors may also participate.</p>

Congregate Meals Program (Older Americans' Act Title III)					
Federal/State/Local Agencies	FY09 Funding	Program Description	Eligibility	Application/Benefit Delivery	Participants
<p>Federal: USDHHS – Administration on Aging</p> <p>State: Illinois Department on Aging</p> <p>Local: Chicago DFSS, Age Options, NEIL (Northeastern Illinois Area Agency on Agency)</p>	\$65 million	Meals are served weekdays in sites where seniors naturally congregate, including senior centers, churches, senior housing facilities and community buildings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals age 60 and above Older adults who participate in either the group site (congregate) meal or home delivered meal programs are offered the opportunity to make voluntary contributions toward the cost of the program. 	<p>Application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No application – may be asked to fill out nutritional risk assessment form <p>Benefit Delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meals and other nutrition services are provided in a variety of settings, such as senior centers and churches. There is a suggested donation as with all Older American's Act programs (can use SNAP benefits) 	<p>Seniors over 60 years are eligible.</p> <p>There are no income guidelines, although program is focused on low-income and minority seniors.</p>

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) (Farm Bill Title IV)

Federal / State / Local Agencies	FY09 Funding	Program Description	Eligibility	Application / Benefit Delivery	Participants
Federal: USDA State: IDHS Local: Illinois Food Bank Association Members (8 food banks) and member agency partners	\$240 million for food purchase \$49 million for transportation & distribution	TEFAP is a federal program that helps supplement the diets of low-income Americans, including elderly people, by providing them with emergency food and nutrition assistance at no cost. USDA makes commodity foods available to State Distributing Agencies, which provide the food to local agencies they have selected..	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> States set criteria for determining eligibility. In IL, the household's income must be 130% of poverty or less (self-declaration) and the household must reside in the State of Illinois (not required for sites serving prepared meals). Eligibility is determined onsite.	States provide the food to local agencies they have selected, usually food banks, which distribute the food to soup kitchens and food pantries that directly serve the public.	Low-income individuals and families

Emergency Food and Shelter Program (McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987, Title III)

Federal/State / Local Agencies	FY2009 Funding	Program Description	Eligibility	Application/Benefit Delivery	Participants
Federal: DHHS.FEMA, National Board State/Local: Local boards, United Way of Metropolitan Chicago, non-profit agencies	\$200 million ¹	The program is a model of public-private cooperation. Each civil jurisdiction (a county or city) funded by the program must constitute a local board. Program funds are used to provide benefits as determined by the Local Board in funded jurisdictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local boards determine which agencies receive funds Participant eligibility varies by program funded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food, in the form of served meals or groceries. Lodging in a mass shelter or hotel. One month's rent or mortgage payment. One month's utility bill. Minimal repairs to allow a mass feeding or sheltering facility to function during the program year. Equipment necessary to feed or shelter people, up to a \$300 limit per item. 	Poor or homeless individuals in areas with high unemployment or poverty rates

¹ Based on information found at <http://www.efsp.unitedway.org/>.

Title I & II, Supportive Services – HIV/AIDS (Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency (CARE) Act)

Federal/State/ Local Agencies	Funding	Program Description	Eligibility	Application / Benefit Delivery	Participants
<p>Federal: US DHHS; Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)</p> <p>State: Illinois Dept of Public Health</p> <p>Local: Chicago Department of Public Health / AIDS Foundation of Chicago, non-profit organizations</p>	<p>Supportive services may comprise up to 25% of Title I & II funds. Nutrition services may be included in this category.</p>	<p>CARE addresses unmet health needs of persons living with HIV disease by funding primary health care and support services that enhance access to and retention in care.</p> <p>Most likely users of CARE Act services include people with no other source of healthcare and those with Medicaid or private insurance whose care needs are not being met.</p>	<p>HIV+ individuals- additional criteria vary by agency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals can access nutrition services through local community providers such as Vital Bridges and Catholic Charities Application process varies by agency 	<p>Individuals living with HIV/AIDS</p>

City of Chicago Emergency Food Box Program

Federal/State/ Local Agencies	Funding Source	Program Description	Eligibility	Application/Benefit Delivery	Participants
<p>Federal: Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)</p> <p>Local: Chicago Department of Family Support Services, Depository</p>	<p>Community Services Block Grant Funding and Community Development Block Grants</p>	<p>This service request is used to request a one-time box of non-perishable food for an individual or family in an emergency situation.</p>	<p>Contact information is necessary for the person or family in need so that the Emergency Services Division of the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services can call to assess their needs.</p>	<p>For people determined to be in urgent need, the Department of Family and Support Services will deliver emergency food boxes.</p>	<p>Individuals and families in Chicago that request food assistance</p>

PRIVATE HUNGER-RELIEF EFFORTS

Provider	Programs & Services Offered to Community	Eligibility and Service Delivery	Participants
Food banks and member agency partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food distribution to pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters • Childrens programs – Kids Cafes, supper and snack programs, backpack programs • Senior programs – includes Produce Delivery and Senior Packs • Mobile programs • SNAP Outreach 	Eligibility to participate in programs varies by program and site but as much as possible programs are open to the public requesting assistance	Individuals and families in need of food assistance.
Food companies and grocery stores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donate both perishable and non-perishable food items to food banks, food pantries, soup kitchens and many other organizations that have feeding programs. 	In most cases the food is distributed through food banks and their member agencies	Individuals and families in need of food assistance.
Various community agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive case management and income support counseling which includes preparing clients for paper applications, taking applications on intermediary tools such as RealBenefits™ which can include a SNAP application and/or a WIC referral. 	Varies by agency and program	Individuals and families in need of assistance.

APPENDIX II. INDICATORS TO MONITOR CONDITIONS AND PROGRESS

	Data Needed	Data Source
Program participation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Percentage of potentially eligible population receiving food stamps 2. Participation in school breakfast/lunch program 3. Participation in Summer Food Service program 4. Participation in WIC program 5. Participation in Emergency Food Program 6. Participation in Child and Adult Care Program 7. Participation in Commodity Supplemental Food Program (Cook County only) 8. Number of TANF recipients 9. Number of persons served by pantries and soup kitchens 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. USDA 2. Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) 3. Illinois State Board of Education 4. USDA / Illinois Department of Human Services 5. Illinois Department of Human Services 6. Illinois State Board of Education 7. Illinois Department of Human services 8. Illinois Department of Human services 9. Greater Chicago Food Depository and Northern Illinois Food Bank
Affordability	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cost of living index 2. Cost of food as a percentage of Income 3. Food cost as percentage of income by age 4. Food Price Index 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consumer Price Index (Bureau of Labor Statistics) 2. CPI, USDA and American Community Survey 3. CPI and American Community Survey 4. Food Industry Report - USDA
Access	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Concentration of areas of “extreme high poverty/low program enrollment or low-income” 2. Communities with documented lack of programs (school nutrition programs, summer food programs, WIC sites, pantries)- Poverty status to services provided by community 3. Percent of population who are accessing services by age, gender, income, employment status, and ethnicity 4. Accessibility to IDHS offices 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Analysis doesn't currently exist</i> 2. <i>Analysis doesn't currently exist</i> 3. <i>Analysis doesn't currently exist</i> – Would require analysis of data from IDHS, ISBE, etc. 4. <i>Analysis doesn't currently exist</i> – could map offices versus low income populations clusters
Nutrition	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of fruit & vegetable servings consumed per day 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Illinois Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System
Health indicators	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Obesity rate 2. Diabetes rate 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Illinois Department of Public Health; CDC's BRFSS; Consortium to Lower

	3. Heart disease rate	Obesity in Chicago Children (CLOCC)
Tracking Indicators	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Percent of population in poverty (100% FPL) 2. Percent of population in extreme poverty (50% FPL) 3. Percent of population that are food insecure or hungry 4. Ratio of population receiving services to need 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. American Community Survey 2. American Community Survey 3. USDA ERS –<i>local analysis doesn't exist</i> 4. USDA ERS – addit'l analysis needed http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/FoodSecurity/

APPENDIX III. RESEARCH BEARING ON RECOMMENDATIONS

Committee members and/or staff assisting with the drafting of this document read and reviewed the reports and data sets listed below in an effort to provide a comprehensive overview of the state of hunger in the Chicago metropolitan area and provide recommendations for its elimination.

- A Blueprint to End Hunger 2008.
- A Profile of Older Americans: 2001. Population, Household, and Employment Forecasts for Northeastern Illinois 2000 to 2030. Prepared by NIPC. 2003.
- Access to Benefits and Services Report – May 2008.
- Aligning Policies and Procedures in Benefit Programs: An Overview of the Opportunities and Challenges under Current Federal Laws and Regulations. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
- Blue-ing the Collar Counties. Progress Illinois. March 20, 2008.
- Census 2000.
- Characteristics of Food Stamp Households: Fiscal Year 2006. USDA Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation.
- Examining the Impact of Food Deserts on Public Health in Chicago – 2006.
- The Food Institute Report, Changes in Food Price Indexes, November 3, 2008.
- Hunger in America 2006. Feeding America and Mathematica Policy Research.
- Mapping the World of Nutrition.
- New Survey: Nation’s Food Banks Report Dramatic Increase in Demand for Emergency Food Assistance as Unemployment Rises and Economy Worsens. Feeding America. December 2008.
- Reaching Those in Need: State Food Stamp Participation Rates in 2006. United States Department of Agriculture. October 2008.
- Annual Illinois Report on Poverty 2008 – Heartland Alliance Mid America Institute on Poverty.
- State of the States 2008: FRAC’s Profile of Food and Nutrition Programs Across the Nation.

ENDNOTES

1 Terpstra, A., Rynell, A., & Roberts, A. (2009): 2009 report on Chicago region poverty. Chicago: Heartland Alliance Mid-America Institute on Poverty.

2 <http://www.clocc.net/coc/index.html>

3 <http://www.clocc.net/coc/index.html>

4 U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 American Community Survey

5 SNAP Participation numbers were provided by the Illinois Department of Human Services.

6 *Blueprint to End Hunger, 2008.*

7 *Multinational Monitor: Interview with Jared Bernstein. May 2003, Vol. 24, No. 5.*

<http://www.multinationalmonitor.org/mm2003/03may/may03interviewsbernstein.html>

8 USDA Food and Nutrition Service Participation Data: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/>.

9 USDA Food and Nutrition Service Participation Data: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/>.

10 U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census.

11 2006 Hunger in America: *Local report prepared for the Greater Chicago Food Depository.* Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

12 *Examining the Impact of Food Deserts on Public Health in Chicago:* Mari Gallagher Research and Consulting Group. 2006.

13 *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Block, Daniel, Noel Chavez and Judy Birgen: *Finding Food in Chicago and the Suburbs: The Report of the Northeastern Illinois Community Food Security Assessment,* June 3, 2008; Chicago State University Frederick Blum Neighborhood Assistance Center and the University of Illinois-Chicago School of Public Health, Division of Community Health Sciences. <http://www.csu.edu/nac/documents/reporttothepublic060308.pdf>.

15 *The State of Hunger in the Chicago Metropolitan Area:* Commissioned by the Chicago Community Trust. Prepared by Ben Dietrich. September 2007.

16 *Reaching Those in Need: State Food Stamp Participation Rates in 2006:* USDA, October 2008.

17 State of the States 2008: FRAC's Profile of Food & Nutrition Programs across the Nation.

http://www.frac.org/pdf/SOS_2008_withcover_nov08.pdf.

18 School Breakfast Scorecard: Food and Nutrition Action Center. January 2009.

19 USDA ERS. *Food CPI and Expenditures: Analysis and Forecasts of the CPI for Food.* March 25, 2009.

20 Illinois Department of Corrections: *Data.* June 2005.

http://www.idoc.state.il.us/subsections/reports/department_data/Department%20Data%202005.pdf

21 Rynell, Amy and Amy Terpstra: *Report on Poverty in Illinois.* Heartland Alliance. 2008.

22 Doster, Adam: *Blue-ing the Collar Counties*. *Progress Illinois*. March 20, 2008.
<http://www.progressillinois.com/2008/03/20/blue-ing-the-collar-counties>

23 U.S. Census Bureau: 1990 and 2000 Census.

24 *Population Projection Memo*: Prepared for the Chicago Community Trust and Lead Agencies on October 21, 2008 by Bob Dean, CMAP Principal Regional Planner.

25 Administration on Aging, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: *A Profile of Older Americans: 2001*.

26 U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation: *Characteristics of Food Stamp Households: Fiscal Year 2006*.

27 *Blueprint to End Hunger*, 2008.

28 Super, David: *Background on the Food Stamp Program*. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, July 2001.
<http://www.cbpp.org/7-10-01fs.htm>. Accessed February 15, 2009.

29 Task Force on Access to Benefits and Services and Illinois Department of Human Services and Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services: "Access to Benefits and Services." May 2008.

30 Ibid.

31 City of Chicago Press Release: *Daley Seeks Broadband Internet Service For All Chicagoans*. May 30, 2006.

32 Festa, Paul. Free Net access in the future? CNET News, June 1998. http://news.cnet.com/Free-Net-access-in-the-future/2100-1023_3-211985.html. Accessed April 7, 2009.

33 Parrott, Sharon and Stacy Dean: "Aligning Policies and Procedures in Benefit Programs: An Overview of the Opportunities and Challenges Under Current Federal Laws and Regulations." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. <http://www.cbpp.org/1-6-04wel.htm>. Accessed February 3, 2009.