

2019 ANNUAL REPORT

San Francisco Food Security Task Force



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Why is food insecurity critically important for San Francisco?

One in four San Francisco residents is at high risk of food insecurity due to low income.

Consequences of food insecurity are sweeping and significant, both for individuals and for communities. Food insecurity contributes to poor health, especially for diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, and HIV. It substantially elevates stress and exacerbates mental health conditions. It impairs child development and limits academic achievement. As a result, food security intersects with many issues impacting San Francisco residents, including housing, employment, education, child development, transportation, and health. Food insecurity results in as well as exacerbates health and economic disparities. Addressing food insecurity in San Francisco demands that we address inequalities at their root, including income inequality, systemic and structural racism, and poverty.

Food security refers to access by all people at all times to enough nutritious, culturally acceptable foods for an active, healthy life.

Food insecurity is a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food.

Recommendations

- Maintain core nutrition and food security investments in the city budget.
- Support additional nutrition programs for vulnerable San Franciscans.
- Focus efforts on populations at highest risk, including:
 - pregnant and postpartum individuals,
 - children and transitional aged youth,
 - people with disabilities,
 - older adults,
 - people who are homeless,
 - immigrants,
 - residents of SROs, supportive housing, and subsidized housing, and
 - people with diet related health conditions, such as diabetes.

A full list of recommendations by Supervisorial District is available in the 2018 San Francisco Food Security Report available at: www.sfdph.org/foodsecurity.

We highlight in this report four threats which will need to be urgently addressed in the coming year, as well as ten successes from the past year.

THREATS

Growing Income Equality and Homelessness

San Francisco ranks among the highest in the US in cost of living and income inequality. The number of people unhoused in San Francisco is growing. In 2019, 8,011 residents were officially identified as homeless—an increase of 17% since 2017. However, city data suggests the number of people experiencing homelessness is much higher.

In the 2019 San Francisco Homeless Count and Survey Comprehensive Report, two-thirds (66%) of those surveyed reported using free meal services. Despite this very high uptake in services, fifty-nine percent (59%) still reported experiencing a food shortage in the four weeks prior to the survey—an increase from 2017 when fifty-two percent (52%) reported food shortages. In addition, 67% of unhoused youth surveyed indicated that their biggest service need was food. Supporting food security helps San Francisco residents experiencing homelessness to meet a critical need.

Risk of Increased Food Insecurity due to Proposed Changes in Public Charge Rule

The Department of Homeland Security's new rule that would expand the reasons someone can be deemed a 'public charge' and denied entry into the U.S. or adjustment of their immigration status, including receiving a green card, creates fear and confusion in immigrant communities. By including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (known as CalFresh in California) in the proposed rule, immigrants who may or may not be impacted by the rule may disenroll from CalFresh, or may forgo seeking food assistance for which they are eligible.

Proposed Federal Changes to SNAP (CalFresh)

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) proposed three regulatory changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, known as CalFresh in California) in 2019. If all three were implemented, these changes could result in an estimated 3.7 million fewer people receiving SNAP nationally.

The first proposal impacts the type of government benefits that automatically qualify families for SNAP. For this single change, an estimated 3,245 San Francisco households would lose

access to SNAP/CalFresh. The second proposal would result in strict work requirements for some people to qualify for SNAP. The final proposal would standardize deductions for utility costs (called the Standard Utility Allowance) across all states. For California, an estimated twenty-six percent (26%) of all CalFresh households would see their benefits lowered. Specifically for San Francisco, approximately 8,505 households would see an average annual loss of \$108 in SNAP benefits under the Proposed Rule (using 2017 caseload data). This proposal disproportionately impacts older adults and people with disabilities.

Challenges to Child Nutrition Programs (School Meals, Summer Lunch, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program)

San Francisco relies on federal and state funding to support critical child nutrition programs in schools and in the community. San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) Student Nutrition Services implements federal- and state-funded meal programs through the National School Lunch, School Breakfast Program and Child and Adult Care Food Programs (CACFP) at school sites. The Department of Children, Youth and their Families oversees the Summer Food Service Program and CACFP at community sites. The USDA's Eligibility Guidelines establish criteria for how students and school sites qualify for participation in these programs. Income standards outlined in the Eligibility Guidelines are the same for the 48 contiguous states.

Two factors have contributed to a substantial ten percent (10%) decline in the number of students meeting these Eligibility Guidelines and therefore qualifying for free or reduced-price school meals. First, implementation of the San Francisco Minimum Wage Ordinance (with subsequent slight increases in household incomes) has pushed some households over the income threshold. For example, a family of four with two adults working full time and earning minimum wage in San Francisco will no longer qualify for free or reduced-priced school meals. Second, changes in eligibility for SNAP/CalFresh in California have meant that fewer households automatically qualify for free or reduced-priced school meals because they receive SNAP/CalFresh benefits.

There are ripple effects to the declining percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced-price school meals, as schools are eligible for other USDA meal programs based on the percentage of students qualifying. Two of these programs, the Afterschool Supper and the Community Eligibility Program, allow SFUSD to provide additional free meals to students. Most SFUSD schools operating these programs are approaching the end of their 4-5 year authorizations, and, due to San Francisco's changing demographics, are unlikely to be re-authorized. As a result, supper programs have ended or will end in subsequent school years, and it is likely that SFUSD will not be able to maintain the Community Eligibility Program at over 50 schools. San Francisco students and families that have received free meals for the last four school years may not be able to do so in the 2020-21 school year, increasing the risk of household food insecurity.

Youth and community sites are also having difficulty qualifying for the Summer Lunch Program because of changes in eligibility and program rules. For example, state agencies were previously able to automatically qualify community sites located close to other qualified sites, in order to respond to local needs for multiple sites in a neighborhood serving different populations. This rule exempted many summer lunch sponsors from unnecessary and burdensome paperwork. However, state agencies are no longer permitted to provide these exemptions, creating additional barriers to expansion of programming serving lunch to children during the summer.

Finally, changes in eligibility and program rules also impact child care providers and the children in their care. A recent analysis of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) in San Francisco found that while seventy-five percent (75%) of child care centers participate in the program, only forty-four percent (44%) of family child care providers participate. There are 775 licensed family child care providers caring for 7,850 children in San Francisco, which means nearly 4,400 children likely lack access to regular meals that follow a nutritious meal pattern while over 400 child care providers are missing out on financial and educational supports to serve healthy food. With over 3,000 children in family child care settings using subsidized child care, the connection between family

child care providers and low-income families affected by food insecurity is undeniable. To address barriers facing family child care providers in particular, the report recommends infusing local funds into family child care homes utilizing the Child and Adult Care Food Program, improving local program promotion, and advocating for additional funding and program simplification to State and Federal governments.

Food Insecurity among San Francisco's Adolescents

In April 2019, students from Mission High School's Urban Agriculture class conducted a school-wide survey to measure food insecurity in their community. Based on 126 completed surveys, approximately half (49%) of Mission High School's student population is impacted by food insecurity, eighty-six percent (86%) identifies as immigrant, and almost a third (31%) are unstably housed. Although adolescents are not frequently identified as a population in greatest need or with greatest vulnerability, this data suggests an urgent need for San Francisco to further assess how food insecurity is impacting our youth so that more appropriate programming may be identified.

OPPORTUNITIES & SUCCESSES

CalFresh Expanded to Recipients of Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

For the first time ever in California, older adults and adults with disabilities receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) can apply for CalFresh food benefits. The SSI CalFresh Expansion represents the largest one-time increase in eligible households in the history of the CalFresh program. Based on March 2019 data, 40,735 SSI recipients lived in San Francisco. As of December 2019, San Francisco Human Service Agency has received and processed CalFresh applications for 53% of the SSI recipients in San Francisco, the largest percentage of any county in the state. There are now almost 20,000 more CalFresh recipients in San Francisco than there were prior to June 2019.

Healthy Food Purchasing Supplement Expanded

Since 2014, San Francisco has funded Healthy Food Purchasing Supplements to increase the ability of low-income San Franciscans to afford healthy food. Through Sugary Drink Distributor Tax funding, this program expanded to serve more food insecure San Franciscans, including pregnant residents, families and SSI recipients. Funds allow for purchases of fruits and vegetables at neighborhood supermarkets, corner stores, and farmers markets (including Heart of the City Farmers Market and the Alemany Farmers Market).

SFUSD Serving Freshly Prepared Food from New Kitchen

SFUSD Student Nutrition Services (SNS) opened a new kitchen at the McAteer campus in October 2019, taking a huge leap towards serving more freshly prepared food in the district. The kitchen will serve select Early Education sites, the two high schools on campus (The Academy and Ruth

Asawa School of the Arts), and select elementary schools as part of a pilot program to create fresh meals in-house and distribute across the district. At the middle and high schools, SNS is upgrading equipment to prepare more freshly made meals in-house. As facilities are upgraded to prepare and serve fresh food, SNS is purchasing high-quality food and ingredients in alignment with the Good Food Purchasing Program and serving more local and sustainable menu options.

San Francisco RESIDENTS are NEEDING FOOD PROGRAMS in RECORD NUMBERS

More Food Resources for Older Adults and People with Disabilities

Older adults and persons with disabilities are more likely than their peers to experience food insecurity, exacerbating already high rates of malnutrition and poor health. For this population, nutrition programming supported by the San Francisco Department of Disability and Aging Services (DAS) can reduce food insecurity, improve health, and enhance quality-of-life by providing food in congregate meal settings, by home-delivery, and in food pantries. In FY 18-19, DAS funded over 23,400 enrollments (1,602,635 meals) at over 40 congregate meals sites throughout the City, providing communal dining as an opportunity for socialization and nutrition. DAS also supported almost 8,600 enrollments (2,234,069 meals and 102,557 grocery bags) in home-delivered nutrition programs, and approximately 4,500 enrollments (175,105 food bags) in the food pantry model through partnership with the SF-Marin Food Bank. In FY 19-20 DAS plans to open its fourth CHAMPSS (Choosing Healthy Appetizing Meal Plan Solutions for Seniors) site in District 11, and a new congregate meal site in District 5.

California WIC Card Introduced in San Francisco

This summer, San Francisco became one of the first counties in California to offer benefits for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) on a debit card. The WIC Card replaces the current paper food checks, streamlines administration of benefits, and simplifies processes for grocers. In addition, it improves the shopping experience for WIC families, provides flexibility to get just what is needed during each shopping trip, and allows for replacement of benefits if the card is lost, stolen or damaged.

Health Commission Passes Resolution on Food Security

In January 2019, the San Francisco Health Commission passed Resolution 19-2 supporting food security in San Francisco and endorsing the recommendations of the Food Security Task Force contained in the 2018 Assessment of Food Security in San Francisco. The resolution calls on San Francisco Department of Public Health to address food insecurity as a priority public health issue and calls on Medi-Cal health plans to screen for food security, connect their food insecure patients to food resources, and implement programs and policies to support food security.

Hearing on Food Insecurity among Pregnant People and Families

In September 2019, Supervisor Catherine Stefani held a hearing at the Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee focusing on food insecurity among pregnant people and families in San Francisco. The hearing was requested by the Homeless Prenatal Program. Members of the community shared their lived experience of being food insecure and gave suggestions for how the City can better support their needs. Supervisor Stefani requested that the City conduct an assessment on how the City is addressing this issue.

Food Production in San Francisco

San Francisco Rec & Park Department's (RPD) Urban Ag program supports food production in San Francisco through education events and resource giveaways. Alemany Farm, RPD's primary volunteer-run urban agriculture site, produced over 26,000 pounds of fresh produce last fiscal year which was donated to city residents experiencing food insecurity through three neighborhood pantries and community you-pick days.

What's ahead in 2020

In 2019, the Food Security Task Force approved a strategic plan and launched a working group to operationalize it. Priorities include:

1. Sustaining multi-sector collaboration to eliminate food insecurity,
2. Ensuring adequate community food resources so that San Franciscans have enough healthy food,
3. Sharing measurement tools across organizations and sectors in order to better understand what is working and where gaps exist, and
4. Developing seamless referrals to food resources so that residents needing food are provided with the most current and accurate information.

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