

Hidden Hunger in Eau Claire County

The Meaning of Food Insecurity

Research Conducted by :



LW Extension
University of Wisconsin-Extension

Feed My People
FOOD BANK

Hunger Facts

Eau Claire County

Food insecurity: limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods for a healthy, active lifestyle

Children who have food insecurity	1 out of 5 (18.6%) ¹
Residents reporting food hardship	1 out of 8 (12.7%) ²
Children eligible for free or reduced price lunch	1 out of 2.5 (41%) ³
Residents receiving Food Share	1 out of 5 (17%) ⁴

¹ Feeding America, *Map the Meal Gap, Child Food Insecurity 2012*.

² "Food Hardship in America – 2010: Data for the Nation, States, 100MSAs & Every Congressional District, Food Research Action Center, 3/11.

³ WI Food Security Project, www.foodsecurity.wisc.edu, 2011.

⁴ WI Dept of Health Services, *FoodShare unduplicated recipients by calendar year for 2011 for ECC*

Voices From Food Insecure Families: "We are..."

Falling Through the Cracks

...the day I call to say, 'Hey, I got a job. It's a temporary position, contracted 160 hours'. As of that day...she's like 'well, you won't get any food stamps next month then.' Meanwhile you're really hungry at work and haven't gotten paid yet. And then sometimes they hold back a check, too. Yeah, it took me 4 weeks to get my first check ...

Struggling Physically & Emotionally With Hunger

...when there is enough [food], I can sleep, when there isn't enough, I just couldn't sleep – I can't fall asleep.

Juggling to Meet Life's Basic Needs

When we run short on food we go to food pantries, meal sites, just to [make ends meet]. Okay it's getting towards the end of the month; we're running short. We have to find ways to stretch it. But [we] don't have a car so getting around is another thing, so when [we're] having to spend at the gas stations it goes quick so then you have to figure out how to stretch it the rest of the month.

Desiring Healthy Food Without the Means

I think there's a big difference between eating and eating healthy. Now it's getting towards cold season and now my kids are gonna get sick because they don't get enough fruits or vegetables or vitamins or any kind because they're more expensive.



Voices of Focus Group Participants

- ◇ 43 adults with children (10 Hmong, 4 rural)
- ◇ 1 out of 3 had children age 5 or under
- ◇ Over 50% had two children or less
- ◇ 60% were couples or 3-generational families
- ◇ 42% of adults reported cutting the size of or skipping meals almost every month because of insufficient food

More quotes from Food Insecure Families and the Agency Staff who assist them:

I think there are a lot of families that are falling through the cracks, that don't qualify for programs, but still aren't able to feed their families, especially if they have children. They aren't necessarily homeless families or anything like that, but they're falling through the cracks. (Staff)

The anxiety not knowing what you're gonna do for the next week until your food stamps come in. Just that anxiety and worrying about what you're gonna do. I think that's one of the hardest parts about it. It causes a lot of stress everywhere else. (Parent)

... she said, "No, that's your dad's cheese. He'll be mad if you eat it." So she decided to give him some, so she got a little cup out and gave him about this much shredded cheese to share with his one year old sister. And then he said he wanted something else to eat and she said 'no you can't have anything more.' (Staff)

A lot of people tell me they have enough money on their Food Share for about three weeks of the month. If it's a long month, it's really difficult. (Staff)

But we're still seeing families in our neighborhood that if they chose to use their dollars for food or even for cleaning supplies, then they're faced with, at the end of the month, being short and not having enough money for housing; it's a constant juggle. (Staff)

...I would just love to just be able to eat healthy, you know, every single day. ...if I had the means I would eat healthy and feed my kids healthy... (Parent)

It's expensive to buy fruits and vegetables, like just to buy a little combo of apples and oranges, because you can't afford to buy a pack of oranges and a pack of apples so you're like, oh, well maybe I'll get the combo pack and then you're like (gasp), woow. (Parent)

We cannot afford balanced meals because we fall into a gray area where we can't afford [not eligible] for the programs yet we don't have enough to be comfortable. It's not because we're skinny, it's not because we choose to be. (Parent)

...getting to the food if you don't have a vehicle that works and you're relying on the city bus and you've got young kids. The best place downtown, for a lot of our families, is the little gas station where you're gonna spend a lot for your money for that kind of food and there's not a lot of healthy choices. (Staff)

