

A PLAN OF ACTION To End Hunger in America



There are 48 million Americans — one in seven — living in households that struggle with hunger. Two out of five of those households have children; two out of five of the worst-off households have one or more working-age adults who are disabled. Still others have seniors who are being forced to choose between food and medicine; working adults striving to make ends meet; and veterans trying to find jobs. This level of food insecurity is shocking, but it does not have to be this way. Solutions exist to end hunger.

Grounded in its 45-year history of fighting for policies that address hunger and its root cause — poverty — the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) has issued a bold, comprehensive Plan of Action to End Hunger in America.

Our nation is chronologically half-way toward a 2020 deadline for accomplishing health promotion and disease prevention goals set by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 2010. These Healthy People 2020 goals include the elimination of very low food security among children, and reduction of household food insecurity by more than one-half. To reach these goals,



the nation will have to accelerate its progress dramatically.

The combination of the recovering economy and latest research on the harms of hunger and successes of interventions present a timely opportunity to do exactly that, and to put this Plan into action by building on what is working, and assessing what can and must be done to meet the nutritional needs of struggling Americans. Mounting evidence shows that federally-funded nutrition programs — such as the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); school meals; and preschool, after-school, summer, and child care food — are effective tools that have prevented hunger in America from getting far,

far worse. However, these nutrition programs cannot handle the burden alone. This is why FRAC's Plan calls for strategies beyond further investments in nutrition programs, such as increases in employment, wage growth, and improvements in other income supports like the Earned Income Tax Credit.

Investments in the solutions to hunger would cost our nation less money than it would to treat the outcomes of hunger, including higher medical costs and reduced learning and productivity. The eight effective strategies described in the FRAC Plan and summarized below can be achieved with political will. Solutions exist, so there can no longer be any excuses for leaving hungry Americans behind.

Eight Strategies to End Hunger in America

1. Create jobs, raise wages, increase opportunity, and share prosperity.

We must return to an economy and politics that provide for the nation's economic strength and growth to be shared in an equitable way. That means restoring the value of the minimum wage, higher wages for struggling workers, enforcing wage and hour laws, and more robust public and private job creation. It also means parental leave policies and child care supports that make such work feasible.

2. Improve government income-support programs for struggling families.

Nutrition programs alone cannot carry the whole burden of public anti-poverty and anti-hunger supports when employment falls short. It is necessary to improve tax credits for low-income families, and workers, protect and improve Social Security, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and pension programs, and restore TANF and Unemployment Insurance as more meaningful safety nets.

3. Strengthen SNAP.

SNAP is the nation's most important direct defense against hunger. Boosting benefit levels, to make them adequate, improving benefit computation rules, reaching unemployed adults without

dependents, and covering otherwise eligible documented immigrants would go far to strengthen the program's efficacy.

4. Strengthen Child Nutrition Programs.

Key strategies are to: increase participation in the federal free and reduced-price school meals programs, especially the underutilized breakfast program; expand access to nutrition in preschool child care, afterschool and summer programs; improve WIC; and assure nutrition quality in all of the programs.

5. Target supports to especially vulnerable populations.

Food insecurity rates are especially high among vulnerable groups — children, seniors, people with disabilities, immigrants, rural Americans and people of color. Multiple strategies set out in the FRAC plan would have particularly beneficial effects for such populations.

6. Work with states, localities, and nonprofits to expand and improve participation in federal nutrition programs.

Federal nutrition programs need to reach more eligible people. This can be achieved by ramping up outreach and education, lowering unnecessary and often arbitrary barriers to

participation, improving and broadening performance bonuses and innovation, and buttressing emergency food support such as The Emergency Food Assistance Program.

7. Make sure all families have convenient access to reasonably priced, healthy food.

The national Healthy Food Financing Initiative and comparable state and private initiatives are important strategies to get families the necessary resources to afford adequate, healthy diets on a regular basis. All grocery stores that meet program requirements should also participate in the SNAP and WIC programs in order to give low-income families better access to quality food.

8. Build political will.

The nation needs its political, religious, and civic leaders to speak out about the real causes of, costs of, and solutions to hunger and poverty. Attacks on hungry Americans are attacks on America. The need for help must not be trivialized or stigmatized.

Visit FRAC.org to read the entire Plan and to learn how we can work together to put it into action.

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