



Hunger Pervasive in Garden State

Despite being one of the richest states in the nation, hunger is pervasive across New Jersey. Children, working parents, senior citizens, veterans, college students and others all face hunger. According to Feeding America's Map of the Meal Gap, in 2017:

- Nearly one in 10 New Jersey residents were food insecure, meaning they did not have an adequate, consistent supply of food. That translates to more than 865,000 hungry New Jerseyans – a slight improvement from 2016 when 919,000 NJ residents experienced hunger.
- It's even worse for children — 13.2 percent of New Jersey children suffered from hunger, or more than 260,000 children.
- More than one-third of these residents earned too much to qualify for nutrition assistance.

Growing Need

- From 2010 to 2018, the number of children eligible for free- or low-cost school meals rose 20 percent. In 2018, more than 537,000 children lived in low-income households that qualify for school meals. (Food for Thought: The State of School Breakfast in New Jersey, 2018-19, Hunger Free New Jersey)
- Across the country, the rate of hunger among seniors has more than doubled since 2001, according to the National Council on Aging. And it is expected to climb even higher as Baby Boomers age.

NJ SNAP Participation Declining

Despite a growing need, the number of people receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps) is steadily declining. In June 2019, 687,938 NJ residents received benefits from this federal program – a 13 percent drop from June 2017. The average NJ SNAP benefit is about \$142 a month.

Meals for Kids

School Breakfast. From 2010 to 2018, the number of low-income New Jersey students receiving school breakfast grew 65 percent. Still, more than 313,000 eligible students did not receive breakfast. (Food for Thought: The State of School Breakfast in New Jersey, 2018-19, Hunger Free New Jersey)

Summer Meals: From 2015 to 2018, the number of New Jersey children receiving summer meals rose 38 percent. Still, just one quarter of low-income children were receiving summer meals, which help to fill the nutrition gap for children who rely on school meals during the academic year. (Food for Thought: The State of Summer Meals in New Jersey, 2019, Hunger Free New Jersey)

Seniors, Vets, College Students All Face Hunger

- About 10 percent of New Jersey's older residents were at risk for hunger in 2017 – translating to about 190,000 seniors. (The State of Senior Hunger in America in 2017, Feeding America)
- Less than half of eligible seniors received SNAP in federal fiscal year 2015. That means nearly 137,000 eligible seniors were not receiving this critical assistance. (Food Research & Action Center)
- New Jersey has the highest rate of unemployment among veterans – those who served in the military but are no longer on active duty, according to the United States Department of Labor. Nearly 11 percent – or about 10,000 veterans — are unemployed. These veterans struggle to make ends meet and many are shut out of receiving food assistance because of strict work requirements.
- More than one third of all college students don't always have enough to eat, while nearly half – 42 percent – of community college students regularly face hunger. (Temple University and the Wisconsin HOPE Lab)
- Student hunger was cited as the third most important issue affecting college campuses, according to a survey conducted by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators.
- More than half – 57 percent – of at-risk students were not participating in SNAP in 2016. (U.S. Government Accountability Office report, 2019)

Hunger Free New Jersey works to change policy and practice so every New Jersey resident has healthy food to eat, every single day.

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