



THE STATE OF SENIOR HUNGER IN LOUISIANA

As our population continues to age, an increasing number of older Louisianans struggle to keep food on the table. Often, after a lifetime of hard work, our seniors face a quiet struggle, having to make impossible choices between groceries, medical care, and other household needs. This is the sad reality across the nation, but in Louisiana, seniors face some of the highest rates of food insecurity in the country. Food insecure seniors face a higher risk of chronic health conditions, including diabetes, high blood pressure, and asthma, and poor mental health, which are exacerbated by a lack of accessible, nutritious food. In Louisiana, we pride ourselves on our food, our history, and our family-centric culture. We must continue this tradition by making a commitment to our seniors and addressing this senior hunger crisis.

THE SITUATION

Louisiana has faced some of the highest rates of poverty and hunger for decades, which is especially true for seniors. As a population, seniors are one of the most vulnerable to experiencing poverty, hunger, and poor health.

11.1%

of seniors in the state are **food insecure**, meaning they have insufficient access to affordable, nutritious food.

4.8%

of seniors in the state are classified as having **very low food security**, meaning they are regularly going without food.

13.4%

of seniors in the state live below the federal poverty line.

30.1%

of seniors in the state receive SNAP.

SENIORS WHO RECEIVED SNAP BENEFITS WERE LESS LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE POOR HEALTH OUTCOMES THAN THOSE WHO DID NOT.

OUR RESPONSE

The five major Louisiana food banks provide millions of meals to Louisianans in need through a network of more than 900 community- and faith-based partners. As unprecedented levels of food insecurity persist in our communities, so does the need for assistance. In 2019, the five food banks provided approximately 58.5 million meals. In 2020, in response to the pandemic, Louisiana food banks grew to provide more than 95.8 million meals.



POLICY SOLUTIONS

The emergency food system and anti-hunger advocates across the country have been working for years to alleviate food insecurity. However, advocacy and charitable food alone are not enough to serve this overwhelming need for assistance. Federal programs such as SNAP, and TEFAP, are proven to be the most effective methods in combating food insecurity for millions, especially seniors.

STATE ACTIONS

- Utilize the federal Elderly Simplified Application Project to simplify the SNAP application, extend the certification period to 36 months, and waive the recertification interview requirements for eligible seniors and people with disabilities.
- Adopt a standard Excess Medical Expense Deduction for eligible seniors and people with disabilities.
- Establish a permanent Louisiana Hunger Task Force within the state legislature with representation from legislators, state agencies, the Governor's office, and community partners.

FEDERAL ACTIONS

- Extend the temporary 15% increase to SNAP benefits for the full duration of the economic downturn.
- Increase the minimum benefit from \$16 to \$30 for all SNAP households.
- Allocate additional funding for TEFAP food purchase and storage/distribution for the duration of the economic downturn.
- Waive TEFAP program requirements to collect client names, addresses, and verify income eligibility for clients receiving USDA Foods through TEFAP for the duration of the public health crisis.