

# State Units on Aging (SUA) Promising Practices Combating Food Insecurity: Webinar Takeaways

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by the Office of Nutrition and Health Promotion Programs, Administration for Community Living

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## What is food insecurity?

- Food security per USDA: “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active life.”
- Low food security: poor nutrition quality and limited variety; little or no sign of reduced food intake.
- Very low food security: reports of skipping meals or not eating; reduced food availability.
- Food insecurity can lead to poor physical and mental health, decreased functionality, and increased risk for multiple chronic diseases.

## Food Security Continuum

- People can experience a range of food needs over time, moving up and down the continuum as their needs change.
- Enables us to design interventions to meet unique food insecurity experiences.

## Focus on Food Insecurity

- By making efforts to decrease food insecurity at the state level, SUAs can:
  - Increase access to and use of OAA programs and services.
  - Increase access to and use of nutrition assistance programs.
  - Increase connections to additional food resources.
  - Decrease hospital readmissions.
  - Improve overall health, physical health, and quality of life of older adults.

## Georgia Food Insecurity Initiatives

- Georgia’s State Plan to Address Senior Hunger designates a new position of senior hunger nutrition coordinator and requires the formation of 12 senior hunger coalitions.
- Nutrition clients screened with a six-item food security survey standardized across state.
- The SUA hosts an Aging and Disability Resource Connection conference that includes sessions on senior hunger initiatives.

## California Food Insecurity Initiatives

- Home and Community-Based Services Senior Nutrition Infrastructure Grant Program allows providers to increase older adults served by modernizing kitchens and buying equipment, vehicles, and technology.
- Older Adults Recovery and Resilience (OARR) funding helps increase support to the Older Californians Nutrition Program.
- Partnerships between SUA and state agencies, California Association of Food Banks, local government agencies, and agencies specializing in senior resources.

## Ohio State Unit on Aging Promising Practices

- Malnutrition Prevention Commission established to develop recommendations to reduce malnutrition among older adults; a final report published in 2018.
- Ohio's 2020-2022 Strategic Action Plan on Aging aims to advance elder justice and equity and achieve optimal health and well-being for older Ohioans.
- AAAs and/or their contracted service providers conduct screenings at least once a year. Consumers at high nutritional risk are referred to home and community-based services.
- One local grantee is piloting combined food insecurity and social isolation screening.
- Ohio SUA and local providers expanded certain services (e.g., grab-and-go, grocery shopping assistance, emergency shelf-stable food boxes) during the pandemic.
- State-supported pandemic relief funds used by many providers to upgrade kitchens or purchase vehicles to support home-delivered meals.
- The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program allowed SUA to expand operations to allow bulk purchasing and the distribution of produce boxes.
- Launched *Staying Healthy*, focused on small business restaurants and home delivery.
- Ohio Nutrition Incentive Network is a partnership of retailers, producers, state agencies, and local partners collaborating to improve food access and reduce malnutrition.
- Multi-year partnership with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections has explored opportunities to support aging well while incarcerated.

## New Mexico State Unit on Aging Promising Practices

- The New Mexico Food, Farm, and Hunger Initiative is a plan to revolutionize the state's food system and expand effective programs by investing in local producers.
- Meal Gap Funding will provide food bank assistance to seniors in high-need counties.
- New Mexico Grown Program connects meal programs with locally produced goods.
- Double Up Food Bucks provides dollar-for-dollar incentives to SNAP participants to purchase New Mexico-grown produce at grocery stores, farmers' markets, farm stands.
- Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program provides vouchers to purchase from farmers.
- Senior Food Box Program is piloting a nonperishable box program in five food desert counties – delivery to homebound older adults or distribution at congregate sites.

## Resources

- [Nutrition and Aging Resource Center](#) (ACL)
  - [Innovative Models](#)
  - [Options for Contracting Meals](#)
  - [Senior Nutrition Programs and Sustainability: Guide to Prioritizing Clients](#)
  - [Tips for Recruiting and Working with Volunteers](#)
- [Food Insecurity During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Evidence from a Survey of Low-income Americans](#) (PubMed)
- [How Food Insecurity Affects Older Adults](#) (National Poll on Healthy Aging)
- [Hunger in Older Adults](#) (Meals on Wheels America)
- [Policies to Reduce Food Insecurity: An Ethical Imperative](#) (PubMed)
- [The Food Security Continuum: A Novel Tool for Understanding Food Insecurity as a Range of Experiences](#) (SpringerLink)
- [The State of Senior Hunger in 2020](#) (Feeding America)