



STATE OF IOWA DEPARTMENT OF
Health AND Human
SERVICES

HEALTHY IOWANS NEWSLETTER

June 2, 2023



It's 11:30 am, which means your stomach is likely starting to grumble - signaling you are ready for lunch. Many of us will satisfy this hunger with a well-balanced meal; but what if you do not have access to nutritious foods?

In 2021, 12.2% of adults in Iowa reported that they struggled to afford food in the last year, and 14.3% of Iowa adults reported that they struggled to afford balanced meals ([source](#)). This is known as food insecurity.

What Is Food Insecurity?

Food insecurity is defined as “a lack of access to the kinds and amounts of food necessary for each member of a household to lead an active and a healthy lifestyle” ([source](#)). There are many factors that impact a family's risk of food insecurity. For example, “lay-offs at work, unexpected car maintenance or an accident can suddenly force a family to choose between buying food and paying bills” ([source](#)). Other factors impacting a family's ability to access food include: distance to the nearest grocery store, transportation availability, food costs, low wages and more ([source](#)).

Who Is Affected?

Food insecurity impacts some families more than others. According to the 2021 Iowa Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) [survey results](#), “more than a quarter of Hispanic adults (28.0%) and a third of Black, non-Hispanic (33.6%) adults reported struggling to afford food, compared to 10.0% of White, non-Hispanic adults.” Additionally, adult Iowans identifying as LGBT reported a higher prevalence of struggling to afford food when needed (28.3%) and struggling to afford balanced meals (36.2%), compared to non-LGBT Iowans (11.0% and 12.7% respectively).

Adult food insecurity can have a devastating effect on children, too. Iowa adults living with at least one child under the age of 18 in their household struggle to afford more food (15.4%) and balanced meals (17.5%) at a higher rate than adults living without children under the age of 18 in the household (10.6% and 12.7% respectively) ([source](#)). In 2021, Feeding America reported that 68,990 children in Iowa are food-insecure ([source](#)). In all populations, food insecurity is the highest among those with lower education and household income levels ([source 1](#)) ([source 2](#)).

What Are the Health Impacts?

Aside from hunger, food insecurity leads to a number of negative health effects. Adults and children with food insecurity are at an increased risk for chronic diseases like obesity, diabetes, heart disease and mental health disorders. In many cases, these outcomes are directly linked to the “reduced frequency, quality, variety, and quantity of consumed foods” ([source](#)). Food insecurity also puts children and adults at risk for nutrition deficiencies that can affect cognitive, emotional and physical function ([source 1](#)) ([source 2](#)).

Statewide Resources

Food insecurity does not have to be permanent. There are a wide range of resources available for families across Iowa that need assistance.

Organizations throughout the state are working to make nutritious foods more accessible for families in Iowa. Below are a few resources from the Iowa Departments of Health and Human Services, Aging and Education.

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

WIC is a nutrition program through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). This program provides nutritious foods and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, as well as infants and children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk. Foods and services are tailored to help meet the nutritional needs of individuals during these life stages. WIC also provides lactation support, healthcare referrals, health screenings and additional funds to use at local farmer's markets. To find a local WIC office in your area, visit the [Iowa WIC website](#).

SNAP-Ed

SNAP Education (SNAP-Ed) is an evidence-based program funded by the USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP-Ed aims to teach people using or eligible for SNAP about good nutrition, how to make their food dollars stretch further, and understand the importance of being physically active. SNAP-Ed programs and projects strive to create equal access and opportunities for individuals, families and whole communities to afford to eat a healthy diet and live an active lifestyle. At Iowa HHS, we offer two nutrition education programs, one targeting youth called Pick a better snack! and another targeting older adults called Fresh Conversations. To learn more, visit our [website](#) or contact Haley Huynh, SNAP-Ed Coordinator at haley.huynh@idph.iowa.gov.

Older Americans Act (OAA) Nutrition Services

Iowa's Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) offer a variety of health and support services that empower older Iowans to stay active and healthy in their communities. Congregate and home delivered nutrition, nutrition education, nutrition counseling and evidence-based programming are offered statewide in order to:

- Reduce hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition
- Promote socialization, and
- Promote the health and well-being of older individuals.

OAA congregate and home delivered nutrition programs typically provide one meal per day. Most older adults who participate in OAA nutrition programs report that the meal provides one-half or more of their total food for the day and that they live alone. Participants also overwhelmingly report that they eat healthier and are able to continue to live independently because of the OAA nutrition program, as found by the [2021 National Survey of OAA Participants](#).

Anyone 60 years of age or older and their spouse regardless of age is eligible. Participating individuals are given the opportunity to voluntarily contribute towards the cost of the meal, and contributions are used to expand services to more older adults. The need for nutrition services continues to grow to serve an aging population, and some areas across the state report wait lists. Iowa's AAAs provide over two million nutritious meals and opportunities for socialization each year through 40 Iowa Café sites and 174 traditional sites across the state, which can be located on this [map](#).

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One way Iowa's AAAs are working to improve food security among older Iowans is through a nutrition innovation project known as [The Iowa Café](#). AAAs are forming partnerships with licensed foodservice establishments like restaurants, food trucks, cafés, convenience stores, and grocery stores, improving food access and concurrently supporting businesses and local communities.

The Iowa Café is modernizing the congregate meal infrastructure to provide choice, quality, and nutritious meal options to older Iowans who may be food insecure, malnourished, and socially isolated. The innovative model is reducing barriers that older adults may encounter when accessing OAA nutrition services. In many cases,

older adults may encounter when accessing nutrition services. In many cases, AAAs have leveraged the Iowa Café model to effectively reach more consumers who are at risk of food insecurity and consumers who are part of diverse communities.

“A gentleman who was a regular at a participating Iowa Café restaurant lost his job. When he stopped coming in, the restaurant manager inquired about his whereabouts. She was told he had lost his job and was living on a can of soup a day. She contacted him and informed him about our program and he now gets a hot meal every day.” -- Iowa Café participating restaurant owner

Nutrition and Aging Resource Center

Connect with the [Nutrition and Aging Resource Center](#) to access more resources to support aging nutrition programs, including [food insecurity](#) resources to guide the aging nutrition network in partnering to help older adults meet their nutritional needs. The Nutrition and Aging Resource Center is hosted by the Iowa Department on Aging in a cooperative agreement with the Administration for Community Living.

Summer Food Service Program & Seamless Summer Option

Celebrate summer with food, fun and friends. Summer is an exciting season for children to enjoy playing with friends, a week at camp, a family vacation, or spending time at the pool, but for many children, summer can mean hunger. Just as learning does not end when school lets out, neither does a child’s need for good nutrition. The [Summer Food Service Program](#) (SFSP) and Seamless Summer Option (SSO), administered by the Iowa Department of Education, provide nutritious meals and snacks to children in low-income areas during the summer months. Summer meal sites offer free meals for all children and teens age 18 and under. Participating at a summer meal site can save families time and money, while also supporting their local communities.

Level up and recharge with summer meals. There are 3 easy ways to find where summer meal sites are operating:

- Text “Food” or “Comida” to 304-304
- Call any of these numbers:
 - 2-1-1
 - 1-866-3-HUNGRY (1-866-348-6479), for English
 - 1-877-8-HAMBRE (1-877-842-6273), for Spanish
- Visit <https://www.fns.usda.gov/meals4kids>

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) is a grant opportunity for elementary schools to provide children with free fresh fruits and vegetables during the school day. It is an effective and creative way of introducing fresh fruits and vegetables as healthy snack options. The goal of the FFVP is to create healthier school environments by expanding the variety of fruits and vegetables consumed and by making a difference in children’s diets to impact their present and future health. Schools are allowed to apply annually for this grant to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables to serve during the school day, separate from breakfast or lunch. Each school receives between \$50 and \$75 per student to fund the program throughout the school year and priority is given to schools with the highest percentages of low-income students.

This program helps teach students where fruits and vegetables come from, allows them to try items they may not have heard about before, increases student fruit and vegetable consumption, and teaches healthy eating habits. To learn more about this program, visit <https://www.fns.usda.gov/ffvp/fresh-fruit-and-vegetable-program>.

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How To Get Involved

To learn more about food insecurity, read [Humana's Food Insecurity and Health Resource Toolkit](#). This toolkit was designed for both healthcare and non-healthcare professionals. It includes food insecurity statistics, a description of the health impacts, steps for conducting a food insecurity assessment, resources to connect people with food and more.

As confirmed by a [2022 Feeding America study](#), "100% of counties and congressional districts [in the United States] are home to people facing hunger." *This does not have to be the case.* We encourage you to share the resources in this newsletter and advocate for policy, systems and environmental changes that will help make nutritious food more accessible for Iowans.

Trainings and Events

[Connections at the Capitol](#)

- "Hear from prominent thought leaders, change-makers, and advocates about current efforts to foster belonging and resiliency among our most vulnerable populations."
- Hosted by the Coalition to End Social Isolation and Loneliness and Humana's Far From Alone campaign
- June 13, 2023 at 3:30pm CST
- To [learn more and to register](#), visit the event page on Eventbrite.

[Public health 3.0 and the future of public health featuring Dr. Sandro Galea](#)

- "This conversation will challenge us to consider ways to transform health systems to become more efficient, compassionate and equitable using Public Health 3.0's framework."
- Hosted by County Health Rankings & Roadmaps
- June 20, 2023 from 2:00-3:00pm CST
- To [learn more](#) and to [register](#), visit the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps website.

[Equity Impact Reviews](#)

- "Participants will learn the steps involved in conducting an EIR and will explore the impacts of unintended consequences. An EIR is a systemic process to review a policy, program, or service to maximize its impact on equity and minimize unintended negative consequences."
- Hosted by the Mid-Atlantic Regional Public Health Training Center (MAR-PHTC)
- June 22, 2023 from 12:00-2:00pm CST
- To [learn more and to register](#), visit the MAR-PHTC website.

[Injury & Violence Prevention Annual Conference](#)

- Hosted by the Safe States Alliance Annual Conference
- September 11-13, 2023 in Denver, CO
- To [learn more](#) and to [register](#), visit the Safe States Alliance website.

News and Resources

The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services has released the [2022 Local Public Health Systems Survey Report](#).

- This report examines public health practice across all 99 counties, which is key to:
 - Understanding the role variability plays in implementing public health activities and services
 - Determining similarities and differences within public health structures
 - Identifying opportunities to enhance and address Iowa's public health

- Identifying opportunities to enhance and advance Iowa's public health system

The Iowa Commission of Latino Affairs is accepting nominations for the 2023 Iowa [Latino Hall of Fame](#).

- Nomination categories include:
 - Iowa Latino Hall of Fame
 - Iowa LGBTQIA Leadership Award (for LGBTQIA people of Color)
 - Iowa Latinx Youth Leadership Award
 - The Robert D. Ray Award for Equity and Justice (Latino or non-Latino)
- The deadline for nominations is July 1st, 2023

The Iowa Cancer Consortium [needs help](#) to gather important cancer survivorship data in Iowa!

- In partnership with the Cancer Support Community and Gilda's Club, the Iowa Cancer Consortium is participating in the Cancer Experience Registry.
- This [online survey](#) is an opportunity for cancer patients, survivors, and caregivers to share about their concerns, quality of life, access to care, the impact of cancer on work, treatment decision making, and more.
- This information collected in this survey will help inform policy makers, cancer control programs, the Iowa Cancer Plan, and more.
- It takes approximately 35 minutes to complete, but you can save your progress and come back to it.
- Survey respondents must be 18 or older to take the survey, but it doesn't matter what type of cancer, time since diagnosis, or age at diagnosis.

The Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health recently released the inaugural [Maternal Mental Health Report Cards](#)!

- The report cards grade states in three domains: Providers and Programs, Screening and Screen Reimbursement, and Insurance Coverage and Payment.
- 42 states received D's and F's - including Iowa
- To learn more about these report cards, watch a [recorded congressional briefing](#).

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has released an [Emergency Preparedness Toolkit](#) that addresses the needs of children and youth with special health care needs.

- "The toolkit includes approaches, resources, and practices to address the disaster health needs of this population, including a module on communication."
- "Health care, public health, and social services providers can use this toolkit to help ensure that children with special health care needs and their families and caregivers receive timely and accurate information about hazards and safety before, during, and after an emergency."

* Healthy Iowans represents Iowa's state health assessment and state health improvement plan process. This process is grounded in collaboration and includes a wide variety of partners ranging from nonprofits, local public health agencies, businesses, educational institutions and more. Healthy Iowans is coordinated by the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. *