

# **Sacramento Hunger Coalition Completes New Report on "Hunger & Nutrition in Sacramento"**

## ***Summary***

### **The goals of the survey are four-fold:**

1. Educate policymakers, including Mayor Johnson, City Council, Board of Supervisors and members of the Sacramento Steps Forward Policy Board and Interagency Council and the community about hunger and food insecurity issues that homeless people face on a daily basis;
2. Help the agencies that work with homeless people, including emergency food providers and emergency shelters examine their nutrition policies and alter them to better meet the food and nutrition needs of homeless people;
3. Educate the Policy Board in its implementation of the "10-Year Plan to End Homelessness" of the need to include hunger and nutrition recommendations as part of a holistic approach to end and prevent homelessness in the Sacramento region;
4. Ensure that homeless consumers are full participants in the implementation of hunger and nutrition recommendations.

### ***Top Ten Findings:***

1. Demographics: Survey respondents were 57.7% male; average age is 46 years old; 50.9% people of color; 54.5% single and 10% families with children;
2. Health issues and nutrition: 83% identify personal health issues, such as acid reflux, hypertension and diabetes, that are exacerbated by lack of access to nutritious food;
3. Food stamp assistance: 53.2% currently do not receive food stamps [now called *Cal Fresh*] and 65% of respondents receiving food stamps report they only last between 2-3 weeks per month;
4. Monthly food budget: Nearly 53% spend \$200 or more on their monthly food budget, including cash and food stamps;
5. Food storage and cooking: Nearly 60% have no access to food storage facilities; while between 56% and 84% have no access to any kind of cooking facilities;
6. Free food: Access to free food is limited, with even the most

- common source, "sidewalk giveaways," only being utilized by 49.9% of respondents;
7. Discrimination: 16% of homeless people experience discrimination, harassment and intimidation in accessing restaurants and stores in order to eat;
  8. Eating habits and nutritious food: Overall homeless respondents have a fairly high awareness level regarding good nutrition as demonstrated by their purchases and eating habits. However, between 15% - 25% of respondents classified foods such as hot dogs and chips as being good for them, indicating a need for continued nutrition education. Finally, even though respondents may know which foods are not nutritious, they purchase them anyway because of their low cost;
  9. Barriers to eating healthy: Over one third identify lack of storage and cooking facilities and transportation as barriers to accessing nutritious food while over 25% state healthy food is not accessible to them. Additionally, over 20.0% stated they cannot use their EBT cards at local farmer's markets;
  10. Assistance requested: Greater availability of farmer's markets, community gardens and barbeque areas in parks topped the list of programs respondents would like to see expanded in the Sacramento region, with 75% - 85% indicating interest in these areas.

***Recommendations:***

1. Create greater access to fresh and nutritious food, including improving the nutritional quality of free food distributed in the community, such as increases in fresh fruits and vegetables.
2. Expand use of *Cal Fresh* electronic benefits transfer (EBT) cards at local farmer's markets. The goal is 100% participation of farmer's markets.
3. Expand the number of retail food outlets that accept EBT cards.
4. Promote the creation of community gardens throughout the community, including homeless encampments, parks and housing projects.
5. Aggressively expand nutrition education efforts to the homeless and low-income community, including a

- community-based food and nutrition education series tailored specifically to the homeless population (including children).
6. Create a culinary job-training program specifically designed for homeless and low-income people.
  7. Increase transportation options [free, reduced bus/rail passes] for homeless people to be able to apply for *Cal Fresh* and travel to local markets.
  8. Increase outreach to homeless people regarding eligibility for *Cal Fresh* with goal of increasing enrollment. In addition, expand phone interview at intake to include all eligible populations [note: currently Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance is only using phone interviews for seniors and people with disabilities].
  9. Increase access to community food storage and cooking facilities for homeless people.
  10. Create a public education campaign targeting food retail stores to educate them about homelessness and hunger, in an effort to reduce discrimination against homeless people. In addition, encourage more food retail stores to donate healthy and nutritious food to emergency food outlets.

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