

LEARNING TOUR BRIEF #4

Healthy Eating, Active Living: What Does it Take?

OVERVIEW AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

As defined by the USDA, food security means access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Yet hunger affects one in six people in the United States, and one in five people in San Diego. Despite an overall abundance of resources and a highly developed infrastructure, many states are seeing food deserts expand, particularly in low-income communities. During this tour, you will visit the lush and beautiful [Olivewood Gardens and Learning Center](#). Then, you'll engage with a panel of local and national leaders in hunger, food security, and health to consider the intricacies of this complex problem, including the factors that contribute to expanding food deserts and the steps necessary to reverse the trend.

As you participate in this learning tour, you'll have chance to:

- Learn the connection between hunger and obesity and what makes food security a health issue
- Learn various strategies that can be implemented to address hunger and access to healthy food
- Learn how to apply a "sustainability" lens to hunger work. This lens often refocuses partners and grantees on changes to policies, systems and environments rather than solutions that have more immediate outcomes, making the impact of foundation investment felt long after the funds have been spent
- Become inspired to participate in the food security movement

LEARNING TOUR AGENDA

- Part I: Overview
- Part II: National Context with Dr. Cantrell
- Food Security in the United States
 - Connecting food security to health
- Part III: Group discussion regarding food security and community strategies that have worked in San Diego and other communities
- Part IV: Tour Olivewood Gardens and Learning Center

ISSUE STATEMENT

Annually, the USDA conducts a survey to determine food security. Although related, food insecurity and poverty are not the same. Unemployment is a stronger predictor of food insecurity than poverty. Families living in poverty often qualify for federal food programs that are effective at fighting hunger. Many families living on unemployment often do not qualify for federal programs, even though they still struggle to make ends meet and may experience food insecurity.

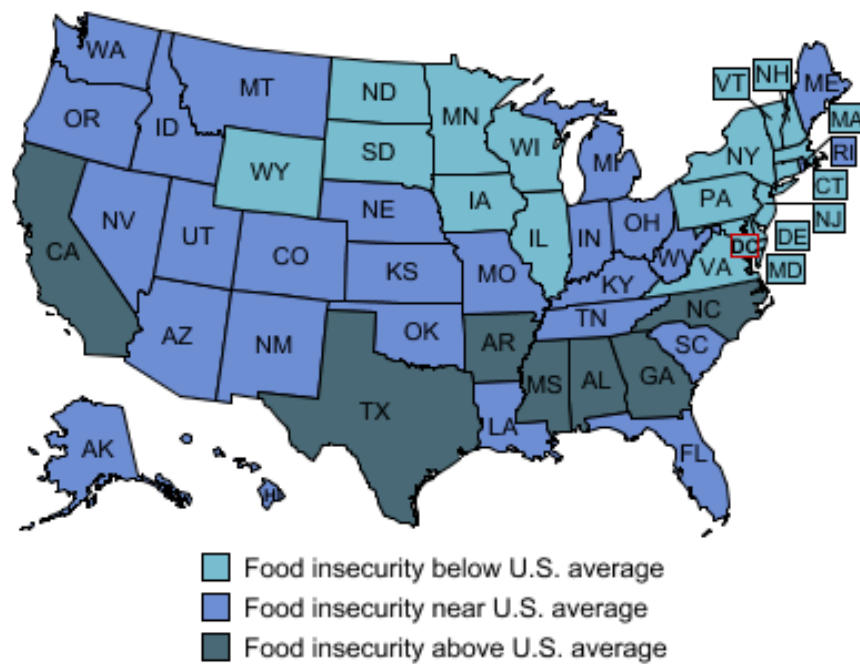
The most recent survey showed that in 2011, 50.1 million lived in food insecure households; 33.5 million adults and 16.7 million children. Sadly, food insecurity is primarily a hidden problem. It's parents who skip meals so their kids can eat; it's people who are forced to choose between more expensive healthy food and less expensive processed food; it's seniors who must decide between medications or utilities and the food they need to stay healthy.

- Almost 15% of US households had low food security, with 6% of those households having very low food security
- Rates of food insecurity were higher than the national average for the following groups:
 - All households with children (20.6%)
 - Households with children headed by single women (36.8%) or single men (24.9%)



- Black (25.1%) and Latino households (26.2%)
- Low-income households with incomes below 185% of the poverty threshold (34.5%; the Federal poverty line was \$22,811 for a family of four in 2011)
- Food insecurity exists in every congressional district ranging from a low of 2.4 percent in Slope County, ND to a high of 35.2 percent in Holmes County, MS
- 57.2% of food-insecure households participated in at least one of the federal food assistance programs – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program), The National School Lunch Program, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- The maximum a family of four living at 130% of the Federal Poverty Level can receive on SNAP is \$668. Most households of four receive an average of \$533.64 or about \$4.45 per day per person
- Approximately, 30% of low-income families living in urban areas have limited access to supermarkets. These areas are often called “food deserts”
- Low income families may spend almost 30% more time in grocery shopping travel than the average; further impeding their ability to provide healthy meals and exacerbating the consequences of low food security.

Prevalence of food insecurity, average 2009-11



Source: Calculated by ERS based on Current Population Survey Food Security Supplemental data.

NATIONAL TRENDS

More and more, researchers have begun focusing on food access as a way to better understand factors that lead to differences in diet and health outcomes. In part, this is due to the increasingly evident disparities in health outcomes across race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Part of the goal of improving access to healthy and affordable food is to reduce obesity and diet-related diseases among populations that are adversely affected. Though it may seem counterintuitive to think that obesity is linked to food access, lack of access to nutrient-rich foods is likely to cause weight gain. For example, a fast food/pre-prepared meal may be quick and inexpensive; however, just one of these meals contains more calories, sodium and fat than is recommended for an entire day.

Families dealing with food insecurity often have more limited opportunities to purchase healthy food and spend more of their time traveling to grocery stores. Compounding their limited financial resources, these families often rely on convenience stores, which sell mostly inexpensive, fatty, and processed foods. Low-nutrient foods have been consistently linked to chronic diseases, such as diabetes and high blood pressure. Repeated studies have found that



people who live in neighborhoods with better access to healthy food also have better nutrition and better health. These studies show that the built environment matters.

23.5 million	8
The number of Americans who don't have access to a supermarket within a mile of their home	The percent of African Americans who live in a census tract with a supermarket, compared to 31 percent of whites
30	32
The number of miles that 70 percent of Mississippi's food stamp-eligible families live from the closest large grocery store	The percent increase in fruit and vegetable consumption for African Americans with each new supermarket in their neighborhood
70,000	5000
The number people relying on a typical grocery store in Washington, DC's lowest-income, predominantly African American wards, compared to one grocery store for every 11,900 people in Washington, DC's upper-income, predominantly white wards.	Number of jobs created by the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative, which provides grants and loans to help locate supermarkets and farmers markets in low-income communities. The Obama Administration is trying to bring this program to national scale.

Fortunately, community advocates, policymakers, and other stakeholders are advancing a growing number of innovative programs and policies to significantly increase access to affordable healthy foods.

Community food security is one of these programs. Community food security is a prevention-oriented concept that supports the development and enhancement of sustainable community-based strategies, such as:

- Improving access of low-income households to healthful nutritious food supplies
- Increasing the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs
- Promoting comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues
- Increasing access to federal nutrition programs that give low income families the resources to purchase healthier foods.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The Center for American Progress measures the annual cost of hunger or food insecurity at \$167.5 billion, comprised of:

- \$130.5 billion in illness related costs
- \$19.2 billion in decreased educational outcomes and resulting lower lifetime earnings
- \$17.8 billion in charitable contributions; this figure does not include the cost of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and the other key federal nutrition programs, which run at about \$94 billion a year.

Effects of hunger on children:

- The first three years of a child's life are a period of rapid brain development. Too little energy, protein, and nutrients during this time can lead to lasting deficits in cognitive, social, and emotional development
- Hunger reduces a child's motor skills, activity level, and motivation to explore the environment. Movement and exploration are important to cognitive development, and more active children elicit more stimulation and attention from their caregivers, which promotes social and emotional development
- Hungry children are more likely to:
 - Receive special education services, repeat a grade in school, and receive mental health counseling
 - Exhibit "behavioral issues" such as fighting, blaming others for problems, or not listening to or following rules
 - Demonstrate anxious, irritable, and oppositional behavior in comparison to peers

HOW IS THE SAN DIEGO COMMUNITY DEALING WITH THIS ISSUE?

County of San Diego Health & Human Services Agency's [Live Well, San Diego!](#) Initiative is working to create a healthy, safe and thriving county. Programs such as Nurse-Family Partnership, Video interviewing to enroll clients into Medi-Cal and CalFresh and the Beacon Project are getting San Diego County residents access to services. HHSA has also assisted San Diego schools in adopting wellness policies, farm to school, and increased physical activity to create healthier environments in schools. Working with the community leaders, HHSA coordinates the Healthy Communities Leadership Teams in difference regions which actively works to ensure that all families in San Diego live safe, healthy and self-sufficient lives.

Started in February 2010 and home to the International Community Foundation, Olivewood Gardens and Learning Center serves as an interactive, indoor-outdoor classroom for children and adults from around San Diego County. Housed on a historic 6.85-acre property in National City, Olivewood provides science based environmental education lessons, hands-on gardening, and hands-on cooking and nutrition education to students and families from underserved communities.

Olivewood's core program offers visiting elementary school students a curriculum of ecological, academic and culinary lessons to build scientific literacy and environmental awareness, while encouraging students and visitors to explore the interrelationships between a quality diet, sustainable agriculture and healthy living. Through garden-based nutrition education, the programs inspire children to explore connections between plants and the natural world, and the disciplines of history, science, art, literature, math, geography and nutrition. The science based environmental education program offers hands-on, inquiry-based experiences in sustainable agriculture, water conservation, recycling and composting.

In addition to the core school program, Olivewood offers adult education including cooking and nutrition classes for parents, gardening classes for adults and teens, field trips for all ages, weekly tours, and weekend family days, along with meetings and luncheons for health- and sustainability-related companies and organizations.

Although Olivewood serves students and adults from around San Diego County, their primary constituency is in National City. According to San Diego County's Department of Health & Human Services, the rate of diabetes hospitalization and mortality is 2.3 times greater in National City than the county average. National City, squeezed between its giant neighbors San Diego and Chula Vista, has few human and social service organizations located within its borders. Yet the need is enormous: according to California Border Kids Count, in 2007, 34% of National City's children and youth lived in poverty. Eighty-five percent of students in the National School District qualify for free/reduced lunch. Nearly every major street corner in National City is occupied by a fast food restaurant. This, coupled with the noticeable lack of stores selling healthy foods, qualifies many parts of National City as a "food desert" a designation given by the USDA.

Olivewood Gardens serves nearly 5,000 students each year including 3,000 elementary aged children in the National School District. Children who participate receive important nutrition education in the context of a garden-based learning environment. As demonstrated at other garden-based learning facilities throughout the state, such experiences significantly increase children's knowledge of, preference for, and consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, even into adulthood. Olivewood Gardens is one of the few school garden programs in the country that emphasizes food preparation along with garden cultivation, teaching children and adults not just to grow but how to cook – and enjoy – tasty, healthy, whole foods. Additionally, Olivewood is the only center of its kind, serving San Diego County's three million rural, urban, and suburban residents.

Please read *Olivewood Gardens: The Role of Cross-Border Community Philanthropy in Promoting Healthy Communities in San Diego's South Bay & Border Region* to learn more.



Olivewood
Gardens-CaseStudy

ARE THERE MORE RESOURCES I CAN ACCESS ON THIS?

- [Accelerating Progress in Obesity](#)
- [A Place at the Table](#)



- [California FreshWorks Fund](#): The California Endowment and partners developed the California FreshWorks Fund (CAFWF), a public-private partnership loan fund created to increase access to healthy foods in underserved communities, spur economic development that supports healthy communities, and inspire innovation in healthy food retailing.
- The [Convergence Partnership](#) was founded by a collaborative of funders on the belief that health and place are inextricably linked. People are healthy when the places where they live support good health. Without a healthy environment, people are more likely to suffer from obesity or other chronic diseases: diabetes, asthma, and heart disease.
- [Sustainable Agriculture & Food Systems Funder](#) (SAFSF) is an international network of grantmakers that works to foster communication, shared learning and information exchange about issues connected to sustainable agriculture and food systems. SAFSF seeks to carry out its mission by providing opportunities for collaboration, increasing awareness of the issues as well as funding needs, and expanding beyond the current membership to increase support and funding for organizations that promote sustainable and just production; link to concerns about sustainability and justice of our food system; and/or connect food production with issues of environmental stewardship, diet and health, and viability of communities.
- The [New Venture Fund](#) conducts public interest projects and provides professional insight and services to institutions and individuals seeking to foster change through strategic philanthropy. We help donors and social entrepreneurs launch new projects quickly and effectively, collaborate with each other efficiently, and develop high-impact grantmaking programs.
- The [Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities](#) is a membership organization that helps grantmakers across North America advance strategies to create fair, prosperous, and sustainable regions and communities that offer everyone the chance for a good life. We believe that the suite of tools available to funders—investing, grantmaking, collaborating, convening, facilitating, and more—uniquely position them to lead the movement for smarter growth policies and practices that benefit both places and people.
- [Food Research and Action Center](#)
- [Linking Policies that Prevent Hunger and Childhood Obesity](#)
- [Farmers' markets](#) that increase consumers' access to fresh produce.
- [Community-supported agriculture programs](#) that provide small-scale farmers with economic stability while ensuring consumer members high-quality produce, often at below retail prices.
- [Farm-to-school initiatives](#) that help local farmers sell fresh fruits and vegetables directly to school meals programs.
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) outreach programs such as FNS's [Get Involved!](#) that help increase the number of eligible households that participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
- [Weight of the Nation - HBO](#)
- [Weight of the Nation - Video](#)

REFERENCES:

[American Progress - Hunger](#)

[Families in Poverty](#)

[Food Research and Action Center - SNAP](#)

[Strategies](#)

[Food Security in the US](#)

[Hunger and Poverty Statistics](#)

[Hunger in America: Suffering We All Pay For](#)

[Investing in Urban Agriculture](#)

[Policy Link - Research and Reports](#)

[SNAP - Eligibility](#)

[USDA Information](#)

Access to Affordable and Nutritious Food: Measuring and Understanding Food Deserts and Their Consequences

"Michele VerPloeg, Vince Breneman, Tracey Farrigan, Karen Hamrick, David Hopkins, Phil Kaufman, Biing-Hwan Lin, Mark Nord, Travis Smith, Ryan Williams, Kelly Kinnison, Carol Olander, Anita Singh, Elizabeth Tuckermanty, Rachel Krantz-Kent, Curtis Polen, Howard McGowan, Stella Kim"

*Access to Affordable and Nutritious Food: Updated Estimates of Distance to Supermarkets Using 2010 Data,"*Michele VerPloeg, Vince Breneman, Paula Dutko, Ryan Williams, Samantha Snyder, Chris Dicken, and Phil Kaufman"

