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2018 State Policy Recommendations

Executive Summary

Food insecurity is the limited or uncertain availability of adequate food.¹ While Nevada has experienced a significant decrease in food insecurity, one (1) in eight (8) Nevada households and one (1) in six (6) Nevada children still do not know from where their next meal will come.^{2,3} Food insecurity is associated with adverse health outcomes and a poor quality of life, including chronic diseases and mental health issues.^{4,5}

During the November 15, 2017 meeting, the Governor's Council on Food Security (GCFS) created a Policy Subcommittee tasked with developing a menu of policy recommendations related to food insecurity in Nevada. The Subcommittee was comprised of seven (7) GCFS members from both the public and private sector, including the Nevada Division of Welfare and Supportive Services, the Nevada Department of Agriculture, the Food Bank of Northern Nevada, Three Square Food Bank, Community Health Alliance, and the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension. The Policy Subcommittee met six (6) times between January and June 2018 to discuss and identify State and Administrative policy recommendations. At the July 2018 GCFS meeting, the Policy Subcommittee presented seven (7) policy recommendations for the consideration of GCFS members, three (3) of which would require action by the Nevada Legislature:

1. Establish the GCFS as a permanent advisory committee, board, or commission in Nevada;
2. Increase meal reimbursement rates to create parity between child and senior meal programs; and
3. Establish a Food Rescue State Goal Bill.

The GCFS voted in support of these three (3) policies as effective strategies for addressing food insecurity in Nevada. This Executive Summary provides an overview of the data and influencing factors which were considered while developing the State Legislative policy recommendations.

Establish the GCFS as a Permanent Advisory Committee, Board, or Commission in Nevada

The GCFS provides a platform for stakeholders and subject-matter experts to make recommendations to state agencies on addressing food insecurity in Nevada, a multifaceted issue related to social and economic determinants, and enhances connectivity among food security initiatives throughout Nevada. Over the past four (4) years, the GCFS has aimed to fight hunger among Nevada's most vulnerable populations, including children and older Nevadans. Specific achievements include supporting Senate Bill (SB) 503 (Breakfast After the Bell) in Nevada's 78th Legislative Session and streamlining State administration of federal nutrition programs under the Nevada Department of Agriculture in 2013. Additionally, SB 503 led to the largest percent increase in breakfast participation in its first year, which brought Nevada national recognition by the Food Research Action Center (FRAC) in 2016.⁶ Further, to address the growing older population in Nevada, a

¹ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/measurement.aspx>

² <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/84973/err-237.pdf?v=42979>

³ Office of Public Health and Epidemiology. Division of Public and Behavioral Health. Food Insecurity in Nevada 2013-2015: A Review of Youth Risk Behavioral Surveillance Survey (YRBS) and Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS). Carson City, Nevada. August 2016. E 1.0.

⁴ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/84467/err-235.pdf?v=42942>

⁵ <http://jn.nutrition.org/content/145/3/622.full>

⁶ <http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/school-breakfast-scorecard-sy-2015-2016.pdf>

programs gap analysis was commissioned in 2017. The final report, *Nutrition Programs for Older Nevadans and Preliminary Recommendations*, outlines the current landscape of Nevada’s older population, the programs serving them, and recommendations to support the needs of this growing population, including establishing the GCFS as a permanent body.

Increase Meal Reimbursement Rates to Create Parity Between Child and Senior Meal Programs

Nearly 80,000 older Nevadans, ages 60 years and older, were food insecure in 2016.⁷ Trends demonstrate a 36 percent increase in the older adult population in Nevada over the next decade. It is estimated by 2025, 17,000 additional older Nevadans will need nutrition services, totaling almost 100,000 older Nevadans in need.⁷

Senior meal programs often focus on supporting the provision of congregate meals. Congregate meals are served in a group setting and provide socialization for many older Nevadans who spend much of their time in isolation. The program provides one (1) meal per day to older Nevadans, ages 60 years and older, and other qualified individuals. Presently, reimbursement rates per congregate meal are set at \$2.20 for seniors and \$3.20 for children. The cost to the State to ensure reimbursement parity for congregate meals is estimated at \$1.5 million. In addition, home-delivered meals (HDM) provide meals to homebound older Nevadans who are at high risk of food insecurity. Depending on the program, clients may receive hot meals, frozen meals, or a combination of hot and frozen meals. To qualify for HDM, older Nevadans must be older than 60 years and homebound due to illness, disability, or geographic isolation and unable to attend a congregate meal site.⁸ In 2017, the HDM reimbursement rate was increased from \$2.65 to \$3.15. This increase allowed HDM sponsors to increase their monthly caseload of clients, reducing waitlists statewide. Creating parity among these programs will increase sustainability for sponsors of congregate and home-delivered meal programs, particularly in rural communities.

Food Rescue State Goal Bill

In 2010, an estimated 133 billion pounds of food from U.S. retail food stores, restaurants, and homes—valued at approximately \$161 billion—went uneaten.⁹ Recovering and donating food for human consumption is a strategy for reducing food waste and alleviating food insecurity.⁹ In 2017, Three Square Food Bank sourced more than 13 million pounds of recovered food (the equivalent of 11 million meals) from grocery retailers and more than 80,000 meals in excess banquet food.¹⁰ In many states, government and business play a significant role in food recovery. For example, in 2012 Vermont became the first state in the nation to legislatively adopt priority management for food before it is discarded. In 2015, this legislation resulted in a 40% increase in donated food for people in need.¹¹ Establishing a Food Rescue State Goal will unite Nevada around a common goal to increase meals distributed through meal recovery and encourage food producers/retailers to implement systems and programs to capture edible excess food before it becomes waste.

⁷ <http://dpbh.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/dpbh/nv.gov/content/Programs/GCFS/dta/Publications/NPGA%20Report%20FINAL%201.18.18.pdf>

⁸ Washoe County Social Services. Nutrition Programs. [Online] [Cited: July 25, 2017.] <https://www.washoecounty.us/seniorsrv/nutrition/index.php>

⁹ <https://www.usda.gov/oce/foodwaste/resources/donations.html>

¹⁰ Three Square Food Bank *Core Data*, May 2018

¹¹ http://dec.vermont.gov/sites/dec/files/wmp/SolidWaste/Documents/Universal-Recycling/Benefits_of_Redirecting_Food_Scraps_from_Landfills.pdf