



ILLINOIS COMMISSION
TO END HUNGER

2014
REPORT



ILLINOIS COMMISSION TO END HUNGER

GOVERNOR QUINN AND MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

Three years ago, against the backdrop of the Great Recession, we embarked on creating an action plan to measurably reduce hunger in our state. Even as we've seen signs of an economic recovery, hunger remains a condition too many of our fellow citizens face today. According to the latest data, 1,833,810 Illinois residents are food insecure, meaning they are unsure of where or when they will receive their next meal. In short, 1 in 7 Illinois residents is at risk of hunger. Further, hunger disproportionately affects children. The data from Feeding America shows that 661,950 children in Illinois are food insecure—more than 1 in 5.

We're pleased to share that the Illinois Commission to End Hunger's third year led to significant progress. Since 2011, we have engaged in an array of activities with a focus on reducing hunger for people of all ages statewide. We have brought together public and private partners, we have leveraged the resources available to us and we have developed creative solutions. In July 2013, we distributed 13.5 percent more meals to children than in the previous year—one of the highest increases for any state in the nation. Our school breakfast outreach efforts resulted in 7.5 percent more children receiving breakfast. And changes to policies and staffing will enable more Illinoisans, including older adults, to readily access the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps).

The Commission has made a measureable impact, but much work remains. The Affordable Care Act has opened opportunities to address health in a nutrition context that we have only begun to explore. The 2015 federal Child Nutrition Reauthorization will set funding levels for critical meal programs in our schools and many other settings. As we look to our next action plan, we aim to galvanize the public and private sectors and the community at large to address hunger. It will take the efforts of stakeholders across industries to make progress again. But we are unified by our belief in Illinois and our belief that no man, woman or child should ever be faced with hunger. Thank you to the Commission members and all of the partners who support the implementation of our recommendations.

Cristal Thomas

Co-Chair

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Kate Maehr

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Executive Director & CEO

Greater Chicago Food Depository

June 2014



COMMISSION TO END HUNGER'S ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The Commission to End Hunger was created by legislation in 2010 to guarantee collaboration among government entities and community partners in order to ensure that no man, woman or child in Illinois should ever experience hunger. The Commission was appointed by Governor Quinn in March of 2011 and was charged with the task of developing an aggressive and achievable action plan that would measurably reduce hunger in Illinois.

The Commission's Action Plan was adopted by the members and presented to Governor Quinn and the General Assembly on March 14, 2012. The four overarching goals of the Action Plan are:

GOAL 1: End hunger by improving access to quality, nutritious food among all Illinois populations.

GOAL 2: Build needed state infrastructure and foster communication and collaboration among government programs and agencies.

GOAL 3: Create public awareness of hunger and the solutions.

GOAL 4: Build and expand collaborative partnerships between the public and private sector to implement Commission goals.

Since the release of the Action Plan, the full Commission, Steering Committee and Work Groups have continued to meet to develop the strategies and build the momentum to achieve the four goals.



SUMMARY

- **13.5%** increase in meals for children in July 2013 (versus July 2012)
- **\$101,988** in grants awarded by Illinois No Kid Hungry campaign to support summer meal and school breakfast expansion efforts
- Illinoisans are now able to apply for medical and/or SNAP benefits **over the phone** by calling the IDHS help line.
- **5** breakfast coordinators deployed across the state
- PSAs and other outreach led to **8** times as many visits to Summer Meals Illinois website in 2013
- **20** Chicago high schools have adopted alternative breakfast models that will increase utilization
- Opened **first-of-its-kind** Veterans Pantry at Jesse Brown VA Medical Center in Chicago
- **74.3%** increase in breakfasts served in Granite City School District 9

“Breakfast makes students so much readier to start school. They think better, they’re more awake—we can tell a difference.”
—a Granite City School Administrator

- **7** schools implemented Breakfast in the Classroom in Decatur
- **3** times more children were served through a summer meals program in Taylorville in 2013 (versus 2012)

ACHIEVEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

- Mounted advocacy effort leading to protection of nutrition safety net programs in Illinois, including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, as part of federal Farm Bill.
- Secured \$2.98 million gift from private philanthropist to fund school breakfast.
- The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) served an additional 413,149 meals to Illinois children 18 and under during July 2013 (July is the month with most complete data). The 13.5% increase over 2012 was among the highest in the nation.¹
- During 2012-2013 school year, 376,272 low-income Illinois children participated in the school breakfast program, an increase of 7.5% over the 2011-2012 school year.²
- Published first-ever School Breakfast Report in collaboration with University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The report will serve as a benchmark and road map for school breakfast expansion strategies statewide.
- Opened first-of-its-kind Veterans Pantry at Jesse Brown VA Medical Center in Chicago, in partnership with Greater Chicago Food Depository, AmeriCorps and the Department of Veterans Affairs in November 2013. The pantry partnership was chosen from 250 entries to win a national Veterans Health Administration award in 2014.
- Five full-time breakfast coordinators began working throughout the state, targeting school districts to implement best practice models to increase participation in school breakfast. Breakfast coordinators reached out to 79 school districts in 2013-2014.
- In partnership with Share Our Strength, \$35,070 awarded to eight schools to assist in their expansion of the School Breakfast Program; \$66,918 awarded to 13 organizations to support expansion of Summer Food Service Programs.



BREAKFAST INCREASE

“We have seen an increase in attendance and decrease in tardiness. I know that for our kids, their two best meals of the day are in school. I know there are kids who don’t have food at home.” –Scott Riddle, Principal, Beardstown Middle School/High School. With the assistance of a Central Illinois Food Bank breakfast coordinator, six times as many Beardstown students began consuming school breakfast.

¹ Source: Illinois State Board of Education

² Source: Food Research and Action Center



SUMMER GAP

“We’re joining our partners here in Illinois and other target areas across the country to help close the nutrition gap children face when schools close for the summer.” –U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. In 2014, the USDA selected Illinois as one of six target states for additional technical assistance to help improve participation in the summer meals programs. Illinois Secretary Vilsack visited a Chicago elementary school in March to meet with summer meal partners.

- Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Midwest Dairy Council and the Illinois No Kid Hungry campaign sponsored the Illinois School Breakfast Challenge. Twelve schools will be awarded prizes of \$1,000-\$5,000 in fall 2014 for the highest increases in breakfast participation rates between the 2012-2013 and the 2013-2014 school years. In Chicago, 20 high schools adopted alternative breakfast models to increase participation.
- Developed partnership with Chicago television stations to broadcast public service announcements in English and Spanish to make families aware of summer meals in their communities. Developed public service announcement that aired statewide.
- For second year, utilized website and texting platform to connect families with summer meal sites. PSAs and other outreach led to eight times as many visits to website in 2013 and three times as many text messages. Expanded texting platform to enable Spanish-speaking parents to text “ALIMENTOSIL” to 877877 receive the three closest SFSP sites to their location. Parent ambassadors from Communities Organizing and Family Issues (COFI) went door to door in three Chicago neighborhoods to inform families and community leaders of the SFSP program.
- Annual Illinois Hunger Summit drew more than 250 individuals from throughout the state representing an array of hunger-relief organizations.
- Held six School Breakfast Summits, in partnership with ISBE and Midwest Dairy Council, attended by over 172 participants representing 45 school districts from around the state.



HUNGER SUMMIT

David Beckmann, President of Bread for the World, delivered the keynote address at the Illinois Hunger Summit on April 30 in Springfield.



HEALTH LINKS

In response to a recommendation of the Commission's Vulnerable Adults Working Group, a pilot in the South Suburbs of Chicago screened community health center patients for food insecurity. More than 60 percent of patients screened were determined to be at risk of food insecurity.

- Held 11 summer kickoff events in eight cities, which increased daily participation, engaged new community partners and resulted in local media coverage.
- Piloted food insecurity screening in partnership with Access Community Health Network and Greater Chicago Food Depository in South Suburbs of Chicago. Of 528 patients screened, 62 percent were determined at risk of food insecurity and referred to hunger-relief programs.
- Collaborated with organizations convened by AgeOptions, suburban Cook County's Area Agency on Aging, to identify access barriers for older adults.
- Worked with Illinois Department of Human Services on developing The Emergency Food Assistance Program paperless signature process to enhance program efficiency. Software piloted at various sites in Cook County.
- Researched agricultural clearance programs in other states and drafted a preliminary report of findings, about the Florida, Minnesota, and Ohio programs, for consideration in Illinois.



A MODEL FOR ILLINOIS

The Ohio Agricultural Clearance Program directs surplus agricultural products from more than 100 Ohio farmers, growers and producers to 12 food banks. The Ohio food bank association purchases surplus commodity products and unmarketable fruits and vegetables, preventing unnecessary waste and reducing losses in the agricultural industry. In 2013, the program distributed 35.7 million pounds, or 29.7 million meals, to Ohioans in need. The Commission aims to create a similar program in Illinois.



NEXT STEPS:

The Commission will focus its efforts on the following in Year 3:

- Develop a website to serve as a hub of information for school breakfast in Illinois.
- Launch a campaign to highlight the value of school breakfast for administrators, parents, teachers and healthcare professionals across the state.
- Expand uptake of alternative breakfast models via breakfast coordinator outreach.
- Continue the Illinois School Breakfast Challenge as a tool for increasing participation across the state.
- Implement redefined Benefits Access and Emergency Food System work groups
- Further investigate agricultural clearance program for Illinois with goal of FY16 launch of pilot.
- Educate the public about the importance of child nutrition programs as Congress debates the Child Nutrition Reauthorization.
- Apply for federal grant to fund demonstration project featuring schools and hospitals as nutrition hubs.
- Broaden access to summer meals by encouraging the expansion of open sites.
- Expand food access by training and providing resources to organizations offering assistance in the areas of Medicaid, home services, tax counseling and other social services.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Corporations – Ask about your organization’s corporate social responsibility approach to hunger.

Elected officials – Visit a nutrition site in your district.

Public – Write letters to your elected officials about hunger. Volunteer at a community organization.

ILLINOIS COMMISSION TO END HUNGER MEMBERS

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