

Advocacy Playbook

Presented by:



SEPTEMBER 2018



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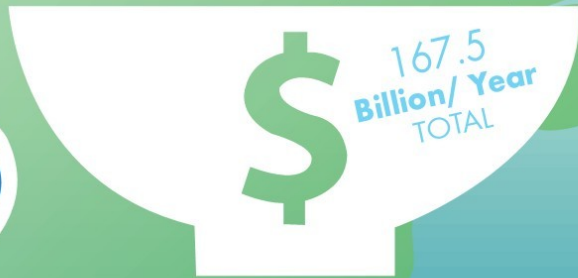


To open a printable Playbook document, please
 click the printer link on any of the following pages.



WHY ADVOCATE?

COST OF HUNGER IN US



FOOD INSECURE



COMMUNICATING WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

USING MEDIA TO RAISE AWARENESS

ENGAGING YOUR COMMUNITY

Calls to elected officials

Letters & emails to elected officials

Join town hall meeting

Visits to elected officials

Tweet elected officials

Comment on online article

Share your story

Educate friends & neighbors

Volunteer at food pantry or soup kitchen

Take the SNAP Challenge

Engage your house of worship

Arrange call-in day

Organize postcard campaign

Encourage legislators to join hunger caucus

Organize social media campaign

Hold a vigil or prayer service

Organize communal fast

Invite hunger activists to address your community

ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES FOR INDIVIDUALS

ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES FOR CIVIC GROUPS

AN END TO HUNGER



Work Performance
Lost Earnings
\$ 19.2 BILLION PER YEAR



of Households Seeking Assistance must choose between Utilities and Food

ORGANIZATIONS

POLICY MAKERS

School Lunch /Breakfast

Meals on Wheels

SNAP

Food Banks

Summer Meals

WIC

Sign on to support letters

Arrange lobby day

Invite legislator to visit your organization

Write a letter to the editor

Issue press release

Hold press conference

Testify at public hearing

Screen "A Place at the Table"

Organize town hall meeting

ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES FOR ANTI-HUNGER ORGANIZATIONS

ConAgra Foods Foundation

Part 1 Introduction

Letter from Alliance to End Hunger

Traditionally, most hunger solutions have focused on the relief side of the equation – giving a man a fish. These safety net programs are crucial to meeting the emergency needs of millions of people in the U.S. and around the world. Despite the tremendous efforts on the relief side, we are not going to end hunger through emergency assistance alone. We must look for the “and” to go with relief. The “and” is development – sustainable solutions to reduce the number of people who rely on the emergency food system. Teaching a man – or woman – to fish.

There will always be a need for food banks and food pantries for individuals and families who fall on hard times or cannot provide enough food for themselves due to extenuating circumstances. But the national crisis of the working poor – those individuals and families who work one or more jobs 40 or more hours a week but still don't have access to enough nutritious food each month – is a systematic challenge that only a combination of economic and political solutions can – and should – fix. It's that “and” of relief plus development – food for those who need it AND the systematic changes to reduce the demand for emergency food assistance – that will lead us to the end of hunger.

Likewise, it is not solely a government or private sector solution. It is always a government AND private sector solution. To give a bit of perspective, in the U.S. 95% of food assistance is provided through federal nutrition programs, with only 5% coming from the private sector. Think about that for a minute: all of the food banks, food pantries, food rescue programs, and soup kitchens and the AMAZING work that they do currently meet 5% of the need. Or to put it another way, for every 20 bags of groceries provided to individuals in need, 19 of those come through federal programs. But without the private relief there would be a huge gap between the demand and the supply. The AND is the key here. Neither relief nor development will get us there on its own – only by the two pieces working together can we end hunger.

So, what can one person or one organization do? We have also all heard – and possibly even used – the comment: “At least we aren't trying to end world hunger!” Of course one individual or one group can't solve hunger alone. But we can do it if we put our individual strengths to work in a coordinated fashion, all focused on one goal: ending hunger. Do what is in front of you. And connect with others.

This is what we do at the Alliance to End Hunger. Our mission is to bring together diverse groups – corporations, non-profits, faith-based organizations, universities, healthcare systems, and traditional anti-hunger groups – to build the public and political will to end hunger. Part of the challenge is raising awareness of the depth and breadth of the issue of hunger with those who aren't focused on it day-to-day. There is significant food insecurity in every one of the 435 congressional districts in the U.S. But it is amazing how many elected officials don't know this. Part of the challenge is letting elected officials know that this is an issue that a wide range of constituents care about.

If every person who donates food, volunteers at a soup kitchen, participates in a food-packaging event, or in any way supports the relief side of anti-hunger efforts also engaged in an advocacy-related activity, it would have a tremendous impact on the priority of ending hunger among our elected officials.

We are so grateful to ConAgra Foods Foundation for their vision and financial support for this advocacy playbook. Together, we hope to change the national discussion and create a national goal of ending hunger.

Sincerely,



Rebecca E. Middleton
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
Alliance to End Hunger



Letter from ConAgra Food Foundation

My cousin who is now well into his adult 40s-ish life, will always and forever be remembered for something he said when he was four years old. When on a camping trip, my dad asked him to gather firewood, and he said "I too small." Well my dad, who never accepted that answer from any of us, took him by the hand and showed him how, one piece of wood at the time. He did it.

When we think of the word advocacy, some of us may get a range of visions from the 1960's, from the march on Selma for equality to the bra-burning demonstrations for women's rights. If that is the case, many of us today may say "I too small." Advocacy, the act of supporting or recommending, includes a range of activities from increasing knowledge about an issue to holding an event or testifying. We need a trusted person/organization to show us the way.

This is why we are pleased to partner with the Alliance to End Hunger to create the Advocacy Playbook, a tool designed to both de-mystify the picture of what it means to be an advocate in the anti-hunger space and empower leaders in our communities with the knowledge, skills and tools for how to effectively get involved.

In the words of Maine's State Senator Justin Alford of Portland, Feeding a child is easy, but ending childhood hunger takes work from all of us. To enable more involvement toward solutions in the big, complex hunger space, we need more advocates, driving awareness, educating elected officials, and championing for effective programs designed to help the most vulnerable. And this is why ConAgra Foods Foundation is partnering with experts in hunger and volunteer engagement to enable more actions that put solutions within reach for children and families. No one is too small to help others and significantly reduce hunger in the process.



Kori Reed

VICE PRESIDENT OF CAUSE AND FOUNDATION

ConAgra Foods





Let's get started...



Part 2 Why Advocate?

When an individual first thinks about ways to help people who do not have access to enough food, the first idea is almost always to hold a food drive, work in a soup kitchen, or volunteer at a food bank. These are incredibly important and valuable activities – these are the social safety nets for families and individuals who need them. Through these food rescue and distribution systems, tens of millions of individuals across the country find the relief and hope they need. But in order to end hunger, we need to both reduce the demand for such emergency assistance and continue to have strong federal safety net systems, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Elected officials make decisions based on what they know is important to their voters, and voters must make sure their elected officials hear them.

To put the role of policy into perspective, out of all of the food assistance provided in the United States, federal nutrition programs provide 95% of it. Put another way, 19 out of every 20 bags of groceries for food-insecure individuals and families come through the federal nutrition programs.

A 10% cut to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) would be the equivalent of eliminating all private food donations in the country. While the country should aspire to reduce the number of people who depend on federal and private safety nets, we also need to keep those safety nets in place for people who greatly need them.

Members of Congress receive literally hundreds – sometimes even thousands – of calls, e-mails, and letters from constituents every day. Additionally, a Member of Congress and his/her staff may have 100 meetings a week with constituents, business representatives, and other interested parties, all looking to influence his/her vote on a particular issue. That may seem overwhelming and may raise the question of how one call or one letter would make a difference. In some instances, one contact is all that may be needed to elevate ending hunger – the right personal contact or community leader – and in other instances it may take hundreds of individual constituents weighing in to turn the tide. But all actions to let elected officials know that ending hunger is important are worthwhile.

There are multiple ways in which one can become an advocate, including the 30 activities in this playbook. These activities can be thought of as being on a continuum of possible advocacy strategies. On one end of the continuum is simply learning more about the issues and causes of food insecurity and letting elected officials know that ending hunger is important to you as a voter. On the more intensive end is lobbying elected officials and their staffs on specific legislative actions. There are many other activities between these two



(Source: Bread for the World Institute)

poles, and often the best option is to combine two or more activities. For instance, hosting a viewing of “A Place at the Table,” followed by a letter-writing campaign, would be a very impactful combination. This is why we have called this document a “playbook” rather than the traditional “toolkit,” using a sports analogy to emphasize that you can select different strategies to fit your capabilities and grow your advocacy efforts over time.

Many people avoid advocacy because they do not want to be seen as “political,” however, there is nothing political about letting your elected officials know that you care about ending hunger and asking them to vote for policies that help those who are food insecure. You will be furthering a fundamental principle of our democracy that citizens engage with elected officials to share their values, aspirations and concerns.

Why Advocate? *A Youth Perspective*

This chapter, written by young people specifically for high school and college-aged students, answers questions such as, why should youth care about hunger, and what can we do about it?

“It is everyone’s responsibility to solve hunger. If we want to move forward as a nation, we cannot leave people behind.”

**– Jonah Mackay, 21, Student at Washington and Lee University,
Campus Kitchens participant, Hometown: Voorheesville, NY**

First, it is important to understand that hunger and food insecurity (how we measure hunger in the United States) exist all around us. Even if it does not touch us personally, it impacts us indirectly through the harm hunger inflicts on society. Children who are hungry are more likely to be sick and less successful in school. Adults who suffer from hunger are less productive at work. Once we become aware of these facts, we usually want to help. But where do we start? And why should we consider doing advocacy in addition to direct service?

The Alliance to End Hunger knows that many students are passionate about ending hunger, but might not know where to start. This chapter of the Advocacy Playbook outlines what young adults can do to take a stand and help change the reality of hunger in the United States. This document is full of information and actions that we can take to raise awareness of and elevate our voices against hunger.

Remember, WE have the power to make a difference, and no effort or contribution to the cause is ever too small. Let’s take advantage of the many resources in this Advocacy Playbook so that TOGETHER we can end hunger.



Courtesy of Universities Fighting World Hunger

HOW THE ADVOCACY PLAYBOOK CAN HELP.

This publication is designed to provide us with all the information and resources we need to be effective at advocacy.

The Advocacy Playbook provides:

- Step-by-step guidance on almost 30 advocacy activities;
- Chapters organized by activities for individuals, groups and organizations;
- Activities that focus on communicating with elected officials, using the media to raise awareness and engaging your community.

Because this is an online document, it will always be updated with the most recent information.

Each chapter begins with a chart of suggested advocacy activities (like the one displayed below).

ACTIVITY	LEVEL OF EFFORT	LEVEL OF IMPACT
Communicating with your elected officials		
Calls to elected officials	⦿⦿	★ ★ ★
Letters and e-mails to elected officials	⦿⦿	★ ★ ★
Join a town hall meeting	⦿⦿	★ ★ ★
Visits to elected officials	⦿⦿ ⦿⦿	★ ★ ★
Using media to raise awareness		
Tweet elected officials	⦿⦿	★
Comment on an online article	⦿⦿	★
Share your story	⦿⦿ ⦿⦿	★ ★
Engaging your community		
Educate friends and neighbors	⦿⦿ ⦿⦿	★
Volunteer at a food pantry or soup kitchen	⦿⦿ ⦿⦿	★
Take the SNAP challenge	⦿⦿ ⦿⦿	★ ★
Engage your house of worship	⦿⦿	★ ★ ★

- This chart is meant to help us select activities. The guide helps us understand the level of effort (dumbbells) involved in the activity, as well as the level of impact (stars).
- Notice that some activities require a small level of effort but can make a substantial impact, such as 'Calls to Elected Officials.'



MORE ABOUT HUNGER

Everyone knows what it feels like to be hungry, even if it's only for a minute or two. It is part of the human condition. Now, imagine being hungry for several hours, or not having enough good food to eat on a regular basis. What started as an uncomfortable feeling can turn into serious issues such as poor health, poor grades and emotional problems.¹ We do not have to be okay with it though. We must acknowledge hunger and do what we can to change it.

In America, one out of every eight families struggles to put food on the table at some point during the year. There are some people—adults, elderly, and children—in our communities who experience hunger on a regular basis. This should not be the case anywhere, let alone in the richest country in the world.²

There is enough food grown in the world to feed our population of 7.3 billion people. According to the United Nations, "The world produces enough food to feed everyone...The principal problem is that many people in the world still do not have sufficient income to purchase (or land to grow) enough food."³

The National Resources Defense Council tells us, "40% of food in the United States today goes uneaten. This not only means that Americans are throwing out the equivalent of \$165 billion each year, but also that the uneaten food ends up rotting in landfills...Reducing food losses by just 15 percent would be enough food to feed more than 25 million Americans every year."⁴

Clearly, we need to change how we are using our food resources.



Courtesy of Share Our Strength/No Kid Hungry

¹ Position of the American Dietetic Association: Food Insecurity in the United States, 2010 ² <http://statisticstimes.com/economy/projected-world-gdp-ranking.php>

³ <http://www.worldhunger.org/2015-world-hunger-and-poverty-facts-and-statistics/> ⁴ <https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/wasted-food-1P.pdf>

Many people, when they learn about hunger in their community, spring into action. Many of us have taken action, at one point or another, to lessen the burden of hunger in our communities by starting food drives, or volunteered at local food pantries or soup kitchens, among other actions. We support these efforts because they really help people in need. These actions are considered service. Service is defined as “an act of helpful activity; help; aid.” Providing these kinds of services are a great way to help hungry people in our communities and learn more about the issue of hunger at the same time.

While there is no question that service is extremely important in helping to alleviate the symptoms of hunger, it cannot solve hunger alone, and does not get to the root causes of hunger. Think about this for a minute. Holding a food drive to provide food to a hungry family definitely helps them in the short-term, but it does not address why they did not have food to begin with.

The great news is that advocacy can respond to this. Advocacy can address the basic issues that keep people from being able to provide food for themselves. However, a person’s first impulse when they decide they want to help the hungry is usually not to pick up their phone and call their Member of Congress.

The word “advocacy” can sound a little scary, which can make us feel hesitant to try it. Advocacy is defined as “the act of supporting, or recommending.” Advocacy means action. When we are doing advocacy, we are taking an action to change something. Usually we are trying to get an elected official to take a position on an issue we care about. Advocacy focuses on promoting solutions to problems, like hunger.

“Advocacy secures sustainable results.”

*– Zoe Womack, age 20, Student at Pepperdine University,
Alliance to End Hunger participant, Hometown: Tucson, AZ*

Take a moment to think to yourself about how the idea of advocating makes you feel. Are you eager? Do you have some concerns?

We promise you’re not alone if you have any concerns, and we want to break down barriers



that may be holding you back. Some of the reasons that we hear people are resistant to advocating are:

1. "I'm not political."

We do not have to vote or be affiliated with any political party, cause or movement to advocate. We don't even need to be old enough to vote! However, we do have a right to be heard by politicians, the media and other individuals when we speak out about an issue.

2. "I don't have the time."

There are lots of ways to advocate, and some take very little time, such as [sending an email](#) or a [Tweet](#).

3. "I don't think it will make a difference."

Our opinions matter! Politicians want to hear what we think. Living in a democracy means we have a responsibility to make sure our elected officials take what we think into account.

4. "I don't know how to advocate."

You've come to the right place! We will address some of these concerns in more detail throughout the rest of the chapter.

ADVOCACY WORKS

"Hunger needs to be seen as an issue and youth advocates can take this on and be the voice in the community."

– Emily Johnson, age 24, Graduate Student at Duke University, Congressional Hunger Center participant, Hometown: Victorville, CA

Advocacy can be very effective in influencing our decision-makers to change the conditions that cause hunger. Advocacy can address long-term needs, empower people, get at the true root of the problem, and promote social and political change.

When we want to make change at the national level, we have to work through our representatives in Washington, D.C. Every state has two Senators and a number of Representatives proportional to your state's population in Congress. The chart on the following page shows that a little effort can go a long way when it comes to advocating.

Strategy	Some or A Lot of Positive Influence
In-Person Issue Visits from Constituents	94%
Contact from Constituents' Representatives	94%
Individualized Email Messages	92%
Individualized Postal Letters	88%
Comments During Telephone Town Hall	87%
Phone Calls	84%

Adapted from: "Citizen-Centric Advocacy: The Untapped Power of Constituent Engagement," Congressional Management Foundation, 2017.

ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES YOU SHOULD TRY

Some things to consider before we start. It is always important to educate ourselves on an issue prior to taking action.

Advocacy is taking action to affect a change. What changes do we want to see as a result of our advocacy against hunger?

1. Greater awareness on the issue of hunger in the United States.
2. Change negative perceptions about people experiencing hunger.
3. Motivate elected officials in Congress to change laws in favor of ending hunger.
4. End hunger by the year 2030.

What exactly should we ask our Members of Congress?

- It is ok to say we care about ending hunger in our communities and to ask our elected officials what they are doing or plan to do to solve hunger.
- If you are participating in a school club or extracurricular activity such as FFA, 4H, No Kid Hungry, Girls & Boys Clubs, or Campus Kitchens, ask what their position is on hunger.
- [The Alliance to End Hunger has talking points on its website that can help us craft our message.](#)



“Know the numbers and the facts. The down side to being young is being perceived as adorable instead of articulate or well-informed.”

– Maria Rose Belding, age 20, Founder of MEANS Database,
Alliance to End Hunger participant, Hometown: Pella, IA

Try these suggested activities to get started:

- o [Comment on an online article](#)
- o [Share your story on a social media platform](#)
- o [Tweet your elected official](#)
- o [Organize a social media campaign](#)

“Once you create an advocate, once a kid realizes they have that power to make a difference, they don’t give up.”

– Rachael Brunson,
Community Partner Supervisor at Round Rock ISD,
Hometown: Austin, TX

At the end of this document, you will find a helpful [glossary](#) and list of [resources](#).

The Alliance’s Youth Engagement Initiative, including
this chapter, is generously sponsored by





Courtesy of Universities Fighting World Hunger



Courtesy of National FFA



Part 3 Engaging People at Risk for Hunger in Advocacy

Why is it important?

An important goal of any advocacy effort related to hunger should be to include persons who are food insecure, participating in nutrition assistance programs and directly affected by hunger. To quote Frederick Douglass, a basic tenet of social change is that “Power concedes nothing without a demand.” Social change movements are at their most powerful when people impacted by the issues demand change; so it will be with hunger in America.

Moreover, elected officials should understand the effects of policies they enact and programs they fund. While many people can be very knowledgeable about these policies and programs, including administrators, researchers, policy analysts, and advocates, only the people who currently participate in the programs or are affected by the policies can share their true impact. Elected officials should take the perspectives of these people into account when making decisions about new regulations or changes to existing programs.

While this seems obvious, achieving this goal can be difficult. Typically, people participating in nutrition assistance programs are some of the most disadvantaged members of our society. This creates a set of challenges in terms of engaging with elected officials. Typically, people who are focused on meeting and maintaining basic needs like food and shelter are not fully engaged in the legislative process. Historically, they vote less and are not as active in local politics. A study in 2014 by Pew Research Center revealed that almost half (46%) of nonvoters have a family income less than \$30,000 per year, while only one-fifth (19%) of likely voters are from low-income families.¹

Given these challenges, it is incumbent on everyone concerned to be mindful of this gap and help create opportunities for engagement of low-income and food-insecure people with elected officials. Working with low-income populations to help them understand the legislative process — the budget process and the role of elected officials — teaches them new skills, builds confidence, and empowers them to advocate on their own behalf. By involving people who are participating in nutrition assistance programs in advocacy, we are practicing participatory democracy.

Tips for fruitful engagement with disadvantaged populations

Value their input.

It is important for those struggling with hunger to understand that you value their participation. They need to be central to the process, not an afterthought. They bring an important perspective that should be appreciated. As a result, they will lend greater credibility to your advocacy efforts.

Respect differences.

You should expect there to be differences between you and the people you are working with. You might see diversity in education levels, race, immigration status, and life experiences, among other things. Respecting these differences will help create a basis for cooperation and collaboration. When you treat people as equals, after a while you will start to focus on your similarities rather than your differences.

Bring them along.

You may need to provide training and coaching to help people engage in advocacy activities. They may feel unsure about what they have to contribute or if people will even listen. They might fear being judged or reduced to a stereotype. It would be helpful to make sure they have the tools they need to feel confident about participating in such activities.

Have realistic expectations.

When working with low-income persons, it helps to keep in mind that these individuals' resource limitations can be barriers to participation. Can you provide transportation or child care, or hold meetings/events when they are likely to attend? These types of provisions can make a difference in encouraging involvement.



Part 4 Getting Informed

Hunger in the U.S.

PREVALENCE

What is the extent of hunger in the United States? There is no easy answer to this question. In the U.S., we do not measure hunger at the individual level. The measure that comes closest to identifying the number of hungry individuals is the annual food security survey reported by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Food insecurity is not the same as hunger but it can be a cause of hunger. Food insecurity is a measure that was created to capture a range of “household-level economic and social conditions of limited or uncertain access to adequate food” whereas hunger is “an individual-level physiological condition that may result from food insecurity.” Food insecurity describes a lack of access to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members at times during the year. The food security measure that comes closest to describing hunger is called “very low” food security. Throughout this document, when we talk about “hungry” people we are usually referring to people who are food insecure and therefore, can be characterized as at-risk for hunger. 40 million people live in food-insecure households, 12.5 million of whom are children.

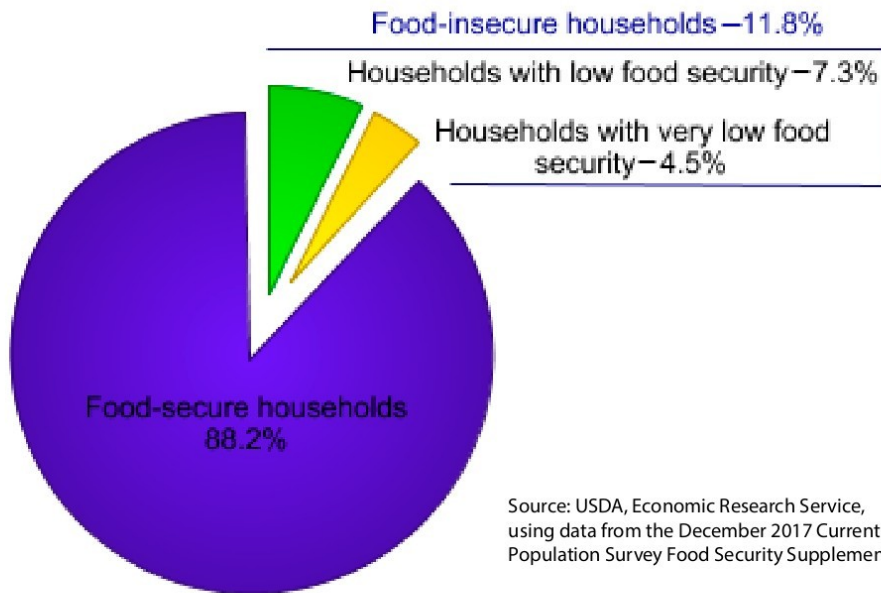
Food Security Status of U.S. Households in 2017¹

Food secure – These households had access, at all times, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members.

- 88.2 percent (112.3 million) of U.S. households were food secure throughout 2017.
- Up from 87.7 percent in 2016.

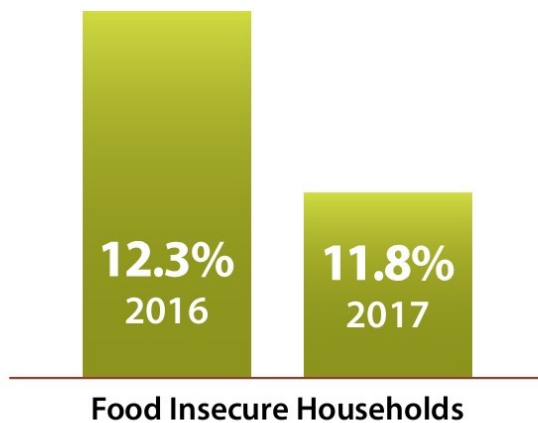
¹ This information is excerpt from <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics/>. The full report citation is: Alisha Coleman-Jensen, Matthew P. Rabbitt, Christian A. Gregory, and Anita Singh. 2018. Household Food Security in the United States in 2017, ERR-256, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service

U.S. households by food security status, 2017



Food insecure – At times during the year, these households were uncertain of having, or unable to acquire, enough food to meet the needs of all their members because they had insufficient money or other resources for food. Food-insecure households include those with *low food security* and *very low food security*.

- 11.8 percent (15.0 million) of U.S. households were food insecure at some time during 2017.
- Down from 12.3 percent in 2016.

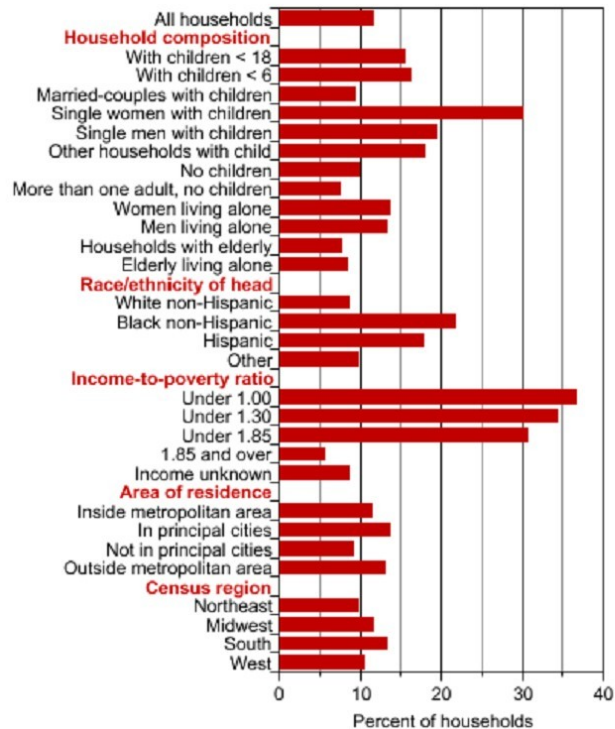


Food Insecurity by Household Characteristics

The prevalence of food insecurity varied considerably among household types. Rates of food insecurity were higher than the national average (11.8 percent) for the following groups:

- All households with children (15.7 percent),
- Households with children under age 6 (16.4 percent),
- Households with children headed by a single woman (30.3 percent),
- Households with children headed by a single man (19.7 percent),
- Women living alone (13.9 percent),
- Men living alone (13.4 percent),
- Black, non-Hispanic households (21.8 percent),
- Hispanic households (18.0 percent), and
- Low-income households with incomes below 185 percent of the poverty threshold (30.8 percent; the Federal poverty line was \$24,858 for a family of four in 2017).

Prevalence of Food Insecurity, 2017



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, using data from the December 2017 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

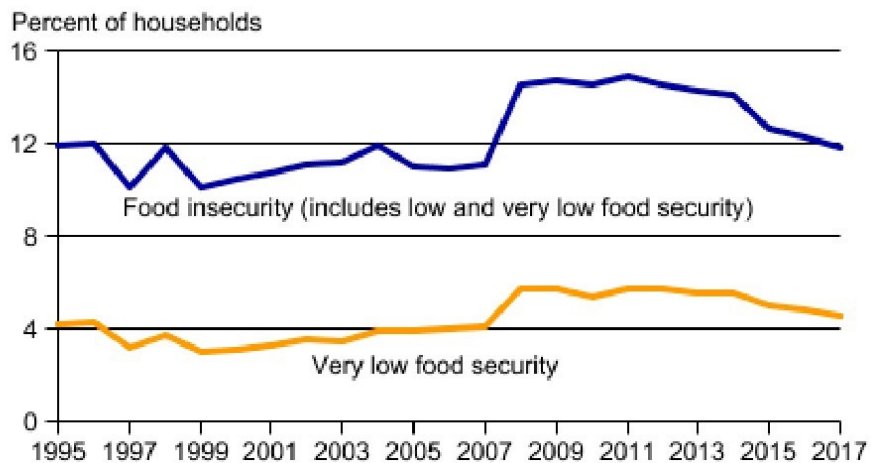
- Overall, households with children had a substantially higher rate of food insecurity (15.7 percent) than those without children (10.1 percent). Among households with children, married-couple families had the lowest rate of food insecurity (9.5 percent).
- The prevalence of food insecurity was higher for households located in nonmetropolitan areas (13.3 percent) and for those in principal cities of metropolitan areas (13.8 percent), and lower in suburban and other metropolitan areas outside principal cities (9.4 percent).
- Regionally, the food insecurity rate was highest in the South (13.4 percent). The prevalence of food insecurity was significantly lower in the Northeast (9.9 percent) and West (10.7 percent) than in the Midwest (11.7 percent) or the South.



TRENDS IN PREVALENCE RATES

- From 2016 to 2017, there was a statistically significant decline in the prevalence of food insecurity from 12.3 percent to 11.8 percent. In contrast, food insecurity was essentially unchanged from 12.7 percent in 2015 to 2016 (the difference was not statistically significant). There was a statistically significant decline in food insecurity from 2014 (14.0 percent) to 2015. Before that, the year-to-year prevalence of food insecurity was essentially unchanged from 2012 to 2014.
- The cumulative decline from 2011 (14.9 percent) to 2014 (14.0 percent) was statistically significant, and that downward trend continued through 2017. Over the previous decade, food insecurity had increased from 10.5 percent in 2000 to nearly 12 percent in 2004, declined to 11 percent in 2005-07, then increased in 2008 (14.6 percent), and remained essentially unchanged at that level in 2009 and 2010.

Trends in prevalence rates of food insecurity and very low food security in U.S. households, 1995-2017



Note: Prevalence rates for 1996 and 1997 were adjusted for the estimated effects of differences in data collection screening protocols used in those years.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, using data from Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement data.



IMPACT

As people, we understand food is a basic need and that hunger can be an uncomfortable sensation when we haven't had enough to eat. Prolonged or chronic hunger, especially in childhood, can lead to malnutrition, which can have detrimental long-term effects.

In the U.S., hunger may also manifest as obesity. When we think of hungry children, we tend to picture children who are too thin, not children who are overweight. How is possible to be hungry and overweight? Researchers have clearly demonstrated that food insecurity and obesity coexist. What remains a puzzle is exactly how food insecurity leads to obesity. Among other things, people who study this question point to the lack of affordable, healthy food choices in many neighborhoods where obesity rates are high among children. They find that, as a coping strategy, many families will turn to less expensive, calorie-rich foods to help keep hunger at bay. Unfortunately, these foods, which tend to be of low nutritional value, are more affordable and readily available in many communities, putting children at greater risk of obesity.³

The question remains: what is the impact of hunger on our society?

The national cost of hunger

According to a report by the Center for American Progress and Brandeis University, "Hunger costs our nation at least \$167.5 billion due to the combination of lost economic productivity per year, more expensive public education because of the rising costs of poor education outcomes, avoidable healthcare costs, and the cost of charity to keep families fed."

The individual cost of hunger

The Center for American Progress' Hunger in America report calculated that "The impact of being held back a grade or more in school resulting from hunger and its threat resulted in \$6.9 billion in lost income for 2009 dropouts in 2010 and that high school absenteeism led to a loss of \$5.8 billion, also in 2010. In total, food insecurity led to a loss of \$19.2 billion in [lifetime] earnings in 2010."



In 2010, "It cost every citizen \$542, due to the far-reaching consequences of hunger in our nation." If the number of hungry Americans remains constant, "Each individual's bill for hunger in our nation will amount to about \$42,400" on a lifetime basis.

A breakdown of the cost of hunger

According to the Center for American Progress, the annual cost of hunger or its threat (i.e., food insecurity) includes:

- \$130.5 billion: Illness costs linked to hunger and food insecurity in America.
- \$19.2 billion: Value of poor educational outcomes and lower lifetime earnings linked to hunger and food insecurity in America.
- \$17.8 billion: Value of charitable contributions to address hunger and food insecurity in America.⁴



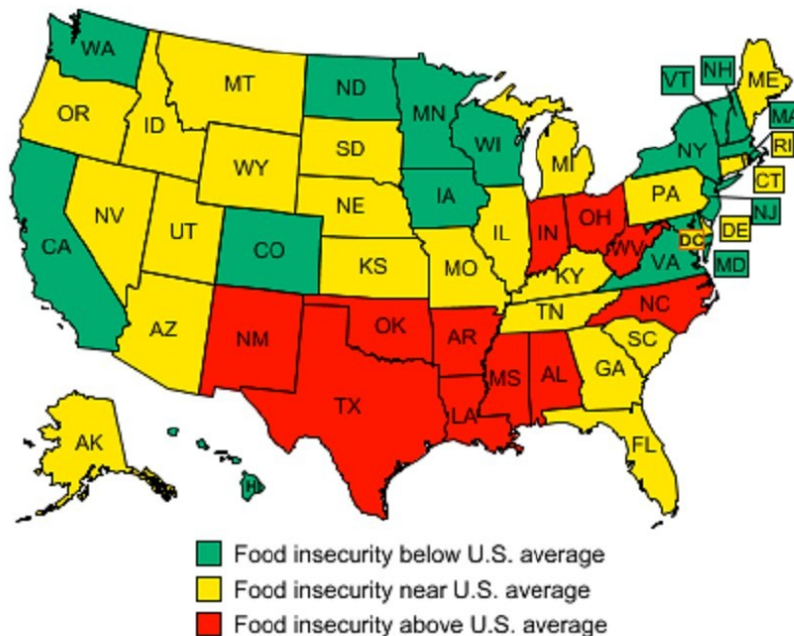
Hunger in your community

Now that you have a sense of hunger and food insecurity in the U.S., how do you find information about hunger in your community? The USDA provides food insecurity information at the state level. Go to <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics.aspx>.

STATE-LEVEL PREVALENCE OF FOOD INSECURITY

Prevalence rates of food insecurity varied considerably from State to State. Data for 3 years, 2015-17, were combined to provide more reliable statistics at the State level. Estimated prevalence rates of food insecurity during this 3-year period ranged from 7.4 percent in Hawaii to 17.9 percent in New Mexico; estimated prevalence rates of very low food security ranged from 2.9 percent in Hawaii to 7.1 percent in Alabama and Louisiana.

Prevalence of food insecurity, average 2015-17



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, using data from the December 2015, 2016, and 2017 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplements.

You can also click on “Map the Meal Gap” to get an interactive map and more detailed information on your state and county. You will receive the number of food-insecure people, the food insecurity rate (in a percentage) and the estimated percentage of food-insecure people who are eligible for federal nutrition assistance programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). In addition, child food insecurity data is available by county and state.

Feeding America, the national hub for food banks, provides food insecurity information by state and county at <http://map.feedingamerica.org/>.

Scroll over the map to find your state or county. See the example for LeFlore County, Mississippi



Your local food bank is also a good resource for information about hunger in your community. To find your closest food bank, go to “Find Your Local Food Bank” at Feeding America at <http://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank/> and enter your ZIP code or state.

Child nutrition programs

Federal child nutrition programs help support children’s healthy development, reduce hunger and bolster academic performance. Child Nutrition Reauthorization is the action Congress must take to continue these programs.

CHILD NUTRITION REAUTHORIZATION⁴

Every five years, Congress reauthorizes the law governing child nutrition programs. This law, reauthorized in 2010 as the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act, sets the policy and funding structure for many child nutrition programs including the School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program, Summer Food Service Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and is currently under consideration.

Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR) offers a significant opportunity to strengthen these child nutrition programs and ensure they are working effectively and efficiently to get kids the healthy food they need, every day.

School Lunch

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) serves over 30 million children in grades K–12 in public and nonprofit private schools throughout the U.S.

Eating school lunch increases children’s capacity to learn while nourishing their bodies. Children participating in NSLP are more likely to eat nutritious foods and meet daily requirements of important vitamins and minerals.⁵ School lunch participants are considerably more prone to consume milk, fruit, and vegetables than nonparticipants.⁶

For low-income students, NSLP has particular benefits. Food-insecure students are more apt to consume nutrient-dense lunchtime meals⁷ which represent a larger portion of their day-long caloric and nutrient intakes compared to children from food-secure households.⁸



⁴ The information is republished from Share Our Strength’s Child Nutrition Reauthorization overview at <https://www.nokidhungry.org/CNR> with the exception of the School Lunch section.

⁵ Anne Gordon and Mary Kay Fox, *School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study III: Summary of Findings*. Office of Research, Nutrition, and Analysis, Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Alexandria, VA 2007.

⁶ Condon, Elizabeth M., Crepinsek, Mary Kay and Fox, Mary Kay, “School Meals: Types of Foods Offered to and Consumed by Children at Lunch and Breakfast,” *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, Volume 109, Issue 2, Supplement, Pages S67–S78, February 2009.

⁷ Nancy Cole and Mary Kay Fox, *Diet Quality of American School-Age Children by School Lunch Participation Status: Data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 1999-2004*. Office of Research, Nutrition, and Analysis, Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Alexandria, VA, 2008.

⁸ Potamites, Elizabeth and Gordon, Anne, “Children’s Food Security and Intakes from School Meals: Final Report,” Mathematica Policy Research, May 2010, <http://naldc.nal.usda.gov/download/42320/PDF>

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 created new, healthier meal standards with twice the fruits and vegetables, more whole grains, only fat-free and low-fat milk, limits on unhealthy fats, less salt and calorie limits. In addition, this law requires schools to abide by nutrition standards for all snacks and beverages sold to students through vending machines and other outlets.

Summer meals

Summer is often the hungriest time of year for children of low-income families. During the school year, 21 million children from low-income families eat a school lunch every day. During the summer months, however, the vast majority (85%) of these same children are not getting a meal through the federal Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). This adds a substantial financial burden on their families, who can see their grocery bills grow \$300 each month during the summer in order to replace the meals children were receiving at school.⁹

The SFSP was created in 1968 to replace the lunches that kids from low-income families were eating at school during the academic year. One of the program's biggest hurdles is the "congregate feeding requirement," which stipulates that children travel to a central location and eat their meals together at the site. When this works, this leads to children eating healthy meals in safe, interactive environments. Unfortunately, this one-size-fits-all model does not work in many communities where barriers like lack of transportation result in the program only reaching about one in seven children in need across the country. This leads to health issues and exacerbates the "summer slide," when children lose ground academically.

Child Nutrition Reauthorization offers an important opportunity to strengthen the summer meals program by allowing states and communities to offer more options outside of the congregate feeding requirement in select communities to ensure the most efficient and effective methods are used to feed kids in the summer, no matter where they live.

Afterschool meals

The At-Risk Afterschool Meals Program helps students get the nutritious meals they need in a safe, supervised location. Through the At-Risk Afterschool Meal Program, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides reimbursements for snacks and meals served at afterschool programs offering enrichment or education programs under the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).



⁹ "National Summer Meals Survey." APCO Insight and Share Our Strength, 2013.

Many afterschool programs already feed students, using money from their own budgets, because they recognize that for many students, lunch is a distant memory and they may not get an adequate healthy dinner at home. However, the red tape involved in having to operate multiple programs can be a time-consuming and expensive hurdle for schools and community groups providing meals for low-income kids outside of school hours. Different meal programs run at different times of year. Each has a different set of requirements. Each needs a different set of paperwork. This creates an administrative burden that prevents many faith-based organizations, schools, and other kid-focused groups from consistently planning and providing meals to kids in need.

Congress should streamline out-of-school meal programs, including the At-Risk Afterschool Meal Program and the summer meals program, into a single program and align program rules to eliminate red tape for community organizations.

WIC

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC) assists low-income pregnant women, new mothers, infants, and young children up to age five with obtaining the healthy food they need. The program offers nutrition education and assistance accessing health care and other social services.

For many children, WIC is their first encounter with federal food assistance programs. WIC fights childhood hunger and improves health, and children under age three participating in WIC are more likely to be in excellent or good health, compared to eligible children who do not. WIC reduces the medical costs associated with poor nutrition. Every program dollar spent on a pregnant woman saves up to \$4.21 in Medicaid costs for her and her newborn.¹⁰

WIC benefits cost approximately \$759 a year per participant and reduce the likelihood of adverse birth outcomes, including very low birth-weight babies. By comparison, the average first-year medical costs for a premature/low birth-weight baby is over \$49,000.¹¹ The WIC program provides critical resources for mothers to purchase healthy, nutrient-rich foods for their children and provides critical nutrition education programming for families.



¹⁰ "WIC: Solid Returns on Investment While Reducing the Deficit." National WIC Association, 2011.

¹¹ "WIC for a Healthier, Stronger America." National WIC Association, 2013.

Maintaining strong support for WIC is essential to ensure it meets the needs of low-income pregnant women and their young children. Congress should continue to support this program, as well as identify opportunities to more efficiently streamline program eligibility rules and enrollment procedures.

For more program information, see <http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/child-nutrition-programs>.



SNAP and Farm Bill programs

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the most widely accessed federal nutrition program. Described by the USDA as the “cornerstone of the Nation’s food assistance safety net,” SNAP provides a monthly allotment for the purchase of groceries, providing households with basic access to a nutritious diet.

The Farm Bill is the legislation that authorizes the SNAP as well as a host of other nutrition, forestry, agricultural, conservation, trade and development programs.

SNAP Participation

SNAP participation averaged 42.12 million persons in Fiscal Year 2017 with an average monthly benefit of \$125.83 per person. This is a decrease of 5.5 million from the peak of SNAP participation in Fiscal Year 2013.¹²

While the participation of eligible persons in SNAP is relatively high, estimated at 83% of the eligible population,¹³ not all food insecure households receive SNAP benefits. In 2017, 23.4% of food insecure households did not receive SNAP benefits in the previous 12 months.¹⁴ Additionally, certain groups are less likely to participate in SNAP. In particular, the participation of eligible working poor individuals is significantly lower (72%) than that of other eligible persons (83%).¹⁵

SNAP’s Impact

Analyses of the impact of SNAP on households point to the importance of SNAP in reducing poverty and food insecurity, especially among children.

- A Center on Budget and Policy Priorities study finds that SNAP benefits when counted as income lifted 10.3 million persons out of poverty in 2012, including 4.9 million children. They go on to conclude, “SNAP lifted 2.1 million children out of deep poverty (defined as 50 percent of the poverty line), more than any other government assistance program.”¹⁶
- An Urban Institute study comparing the food security rates of households upon entering SNAP, and then six-months later, found significant reductions in the likelihood of being food insecure (30%) and the likelihood of being very food insecure (20%).¹⁷

¹²National level annual summary. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>.

¹³Cunningham, Karen (2018). Reaching Those in Need: Estimates of State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates in 2015. Prepared by Mathematica Policy Research for the USDA Food and Nutrition Service.

¹⁴Alisha Coleman-Jensen, Matthew P. Rabbitt, Christian A. Gregory, and Anita Singh. Household Food Security in the United States in 2017, ERR-256, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, September 2018.

¹⁵Cunningham, Karen (2018). Reaching Those in Need: Estimates of State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates in 2015. Prepared by Mathematica Policy Research for the USDA Food and Nutrition Service.

¹⁶SNAP Works for America’s Children, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, September 29, 2016. <http://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/9-29-16fa.pdf>.

¹⁷Ratcliffe, McKernan, and Zhang, 2011, How Much Does the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Reduce Food Insecurity? <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4154696/pdf/nihms329829.pdf>

Other programs that improve nutrition and access to healthy foods included in the Farm Bill are:

- The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) which supports food banks and food pantries;
- The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) which provides seniors (age 60 and above) nutritious USDA commodity foods;
- The Healthy Food Financing Initiative which supports projects that increase access to healthy, affordable food in communities where they are lacking; and
- The Hunger-Free Communities Grants which fund community collaborations to improve access to nutritious food through research, planning, and implementation of hunger relief activities.

For more information on SNAP and the Farm Bill, see <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>.

For highlights of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Farm Bill) see <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda-2014-farm-bill-highlights.pdf>



Part 5 Advocacy Activities for Individuals

Overview

In a democracy like ours, individuals have lots of clout. Voting is one type of power invested in individuals and advocacy is another. Advocacy is the act of persuading your elected official to take a desired action. The key word here is *act*. Advocacy requires action on your part. Action to ensure that 48 million Americans no longer face the prospect of hunger in our rich nation.

Americans are an active bunch, and we volunteer our time on a regular basis. Each year, 62.6 million Americans (25%) donate their time and energy to help worthy causes.¹⁸ You may be volunteering at your house of worship, a food pantry, or recreational program, but may have never thought of taking the step to advocate on the issues you care about. Luckily, in a representative democracy, your elected officials care about what you think, value and want. This is why the most influential thing an individual can do to sway a member of Congress is to directly communicate with him or her!

The Congressional Management Foundation's research has found, "Citizens have more power than they realize." Consider the following:

The most influential advocacy strategies for swaying an undecided member of Congress depend on personal communications from constituents. Whether individuals make contact face-to-face, by phone, or through personalized email or postal mail, senators and representatives are influenced by their constituents' own views about the public policy issues before them.

- Most of the staff surveyed said constituent visits to the Washington office (97%) and to the district/state office (94%) have some or a lot of influence on an undecided member.
- When asked about strategies directed to their offices back home, staffers said questions at town hall meetings (87%) and letters to the editor (80%) have some or a lot of influence.
- Constituents who make the effort to personally communicate with their senators and representatives – except via FAX – are more influential than lobbyists and news editors.¹⁹

In this section, we outline advocacy activities for individuals that focus on direct communications with elected officials, the use of social media, and engaging your community in advocacy.

¹⁸ "Volunteering and Civic Life in America 2014," Corporation for National and Community Service.

¹⁹ "Communicating with Congress: Perceptions of Citizen Advocacy on Capitol Hill," Congressional Management Foundation, 2011.

This section will cover:

ACTIVITY	LEVEL OF EFFORT	LEVEL OF IMPACT
Communicating with your elected officials		
Calls to elected officials	⚖️	★ ★ ★
Letters and e-mails to elected officials	⚖️	★ ★ ★
Join a town hall meeting	⚖️	★ ★ ★
Visits to elected officials	⚖️ ⚖️	★ ★ ★
Using media to raise awareness		
Tweet elected officials	⚖️	★
Comment on an online article	⚖️	★
Share your story	⚖️ ⚖️	★ ★
Engaging your community		
Educate friends and neighbors	⚖️ ⚖️	★
Volunteer at a food pantry or soup kitchen	⚖️ ⚖️	★
Take the SNAP challenge	⚖️ ⚖️	★ ★
Engage your house of worship	⚖️	★ ★ ★

Communicating with your elected officials

Calls to elected officials

Communicating with your elected officials or legislators is one of the most effective advocacy tools available to you. Legislators want to hear from the people who live in their districts. After all, he or she was elected to represent you! A visit with your legislator is ideal. But if you can't visit in person, a phone call is still one of the most effective and personal ways to deliver your message. It lets your legislator know that you care enough to take the time to focus on the issue of ending hunger.

In a recent study, 86% of congressional staff members said phone calls from constituents can influence a legislator who is undecided on an issue.²⁰ Your call will make a difference!

How:

1. Decide who to call. There are a number of different people who can make decisions on the issues you care about. At the federal level, you can call your senators and/or your Member of Congress.
2. Find the names and phone numbers of your senators and/or Member of Congress.
 - a. Find your senators (every state has two).
 - i. Go to http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm
 - ii. Choose your state from the menu.
 - iii. It will return the information for both your state's senators.
 - b. Find your Member of Congress (every district within a state has one)
 - i. Go to <http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>
 - ii. Put in your ZIP code.
 - iii. It will return information for your representative.
 1. If your ZIP code is covered by more than one representative, it will ask for your 4-digit ZIP extension or full address
 - iv. For a contact number, find and click on the "Contact Me" link, usually at the top of the representative's page.



3. What to say

- a. When you call your representative's or senator's office, the call will be answered by a member of staff.
- b. Let the staff member know that you are a constituent who cares about ending hunger and wish to speak with the appropriate aide on that issue. If the aide is not available at the time, ask if there is someone else you can speak to. You can also ask to speak directly with the member of Congress, but it is unlikely that he or she will be available at an unscheduled time.
- c. Once you have someone on the line, reiterate that you care about ending hunger and make your "ask" (see the step below). If possible, try to personalize your ask with a relevant story from your district or state.
- d. There are a number of great resources to help you understand legislative actions that are needed at the moment. Many times they will include specific language and instructions for how to phrase your message.
 - i. Here are some of the national organizations that regularly do advocacy on hunger-related issues. These organizations' websites usually have a "Take Action" or "Advocacy" section.
 1. Alliance to End Hunger www.alliancetoendhunger.org
 2. Bread for the World www.bread.org
 3. Coalition on Human Needs www.chn.org
 4. Feeding America www.feedingamerica.org
 5. Food Research Action Council www.frac.org
 6. RESULTS www.results.org
 7. Share Our Strength www.nokidhungry.org
 8. WhyHunger www.whyhunger.org



Letters and e-mails to elected officials

Communicating with your elected officials or legislators is one of the most effective advocacy tools available to you. Legislators want to hear from the people who live in their district. After all, he or she was elected to represent you! A visit with your legislator is ideal. But if you can't visit in person, a personal letter is still one of the best ways to deliver your message. It lets your legislator know that you care enough to take the time to focus on the issue of ending hunger.

In a recent study, 90% of congressional staff members said individualized letters from constituents can influence on a legislator who is undecided on an issue.²¹ Furthermore, a personalized letter, as opposed to a form letter, was seen as more influential. Some of the content that helps influence an elected official is a personal story, discussing the impact of a bill and/or discussing why you support or oppose a bill. Individualized e-mails are just as influential (88% of congressional staff members agree) as letters. In addition, e-mails arrive immediately and do not require security screenings as letters do. After all, what you say is more important than how your letter arrives.

Your letter will be read by your elected official or a member of their staff. Elected officials usually keep track of the number of letters from their constituents on various topics and whether people favor or oppose an issue. Your letter will help to make a difference.

How:

Writing a letter or email to your elected official is simple.

1. Decide to whom you want to write. There are a number of different people who can make decisions on the issues you care about. At the federal level, you can write to the White House, your senators and/or your Member of Congress. You can send letters to all of them.
2. Find the names, phone numbers, and e-mails of your senators and Member of Congress.
 - a. Find your senators (every state has two)
 - i. Go to http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm
 - ii. Choose your state from the menu.
 - iii. It will return the information for both your state's senators
 - iv. For e-mail, click on the "Contact" field; it will take you to an e-mail form.
 - b. Find your Member of Congress (every district within a state has one)
 - i. Go to <http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>
 - ii. Put in your ZIP code
 - iii. It will return information for your representative.

1. If your ZIP code is covered by more than one representative, it will ask you for your 4-digit ZIP extension or full address
- iv. For e-mail, find and click on the "Contact Me" link, usually at the top of the page. This will open an e-mail form.
3. Find the address to send your letter.
 - a. You can write your senators at:
 - i. The Honorable (Insert name)
 - ii. United States Senate
 - iii. Washington, D.C. 20510
 - b. You can write your representative at:
The Honorable (Insert name)
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
4. Write your letter.
 - a. Write neatly in pen or type. You want them to be able to read your letter!
 - b. Make your letter brief but to the point.
 - c. If you want your legislator to take a specific action, ask!
 - d. Include your return address.
5. What to say
 - a. Let them know you care about ending hunger.
 - b. There are a number of great resources to help you understand legislative actions that are needed at the moment. Many times they will include specific language and instructions for how to send your message. Many will simplify the process by allowing you to send messages from their website.
 - i. Here are some of the national organizations that regularly do advocacy on hunger-related issues. These organizations' websites usually have a "Take Action" or "Advocacy" section.
 1. Alliance to End Hunger www.alliancetoendhunger.org
 2. Bread for the World www.bread.org
 3. Coalition on Human Needs www.chn.org
 4. Feeding America www.feedingamerica.org
 5. Food Research Action Council www.frac.org
 6. RESULTS www.results.org
 7. Share Our Strength www.nokidhungry.org
 8. WhyHunger www.whyhunger.org



6. Sample letters

a. General support for ending hunger:

Dear _____:

I am writing to share my concerns about hunger in the U.S. I understand that 48 million Americans struggled with food insecurity and hunger in 2014, including 15 million children. I believe that it is wrong for so many people in our rich country to worry about putting food on the table. I believe solving the problem of hunger should be a top priority for our elected officials and government.

I know hunger exists in every state and county. [Share information about hunger in your community].

I would like you to invest in both short-term and long-term strategies to end hunger in the U.S.

Sincerely,

7. E-mail instructions

a. If you prefer to e-mail your letter, you can follow the instructions number 2 above to find e-mail forms.

8. Follow up

a. Call your elected official's office to confirm they received your letter.



Join a town hall meeting

Town hall meetings are some of the best opportunities to participate in candid conversations with elected officials, as well as a great way to familiarize yourself with broader concerns in your local community. If you are not able to arrange an appointment with an elected representative, or if you are not comfortable in one-on-one meeting settings, town halls provide an easy and effective alternative.

Town hall meetings stem from a deep-rooted American tradition in which elected officials and other government representatives can communicate with their constituents about pressing community issues and policy processes.

Technology has expanded town halls to include “tele town halls” through phone conferences and even town hall webinars online. In a recent study, 85% of congressional staff members said comments during a telephone town hall can influence a legislator who is undecided on an issue.²²

How:

1. Learn about town hall meeting opportunities.
 - a. Town hall meetings may be offered as opportunities by your local, state, and/or national elected officials.
 - b. Town hall meetings will often be announced through local media outlets, including local television news programs and/or newspapers. Flyers may also be placed on bulletin boards in public buildings such as post offices.
 - c. Elected officials often have websites that will announce town hall meeting opportunities. Sign up for newsletters from your representatives.
 - d. Follow elected officials on social media. Town halls may be announced through Facebook, Twitter, etc.
 - e. If all else fails, call your elected official’s office. S/he or a staff member will be happy to inform you of any upcoming town hall meeting opportunities.
2. Types of town hall meetings
 - a. Traditional town hall meetings are held in local communities, usually in public meeting places.



²² “Communicating with Congress: Perceptions of Citizen Advocacy on Capitol Hill,” Congressional Management Foundation, 2011.

- b. Tele town hall meetings are conference call-style meetings in which the elected official and his/her office “hosts” the call and either provides call-in information for participants or invites participants to join through mass robo-call invitations.
 - c. Town hall webinar meetings, like “tele town halls,” consist of a “host” – in this case, the elected official and/or his/her office – and an audience that can type questions and submit comments through a moderator.
3. What to expect
 - a. Town hall meetings are typically relaxed and informal. In a traditional town hall meeting, the official hosting the meeting may stand or sit in front of the audience.
 - b. Often, the hosting official will give a short presentation on what his/her office is working on and how s/he is addressing select issues.
 - c. The official will ask for questions from the audience. If you have a question you would like to pose, please see below for guidance on preparing for a town hall meeting.
 - d. Please note that tele town halls and town hall webinars may include massive audiences. In this case, the moderator will often ask for questions/comments and combine similar themes to get through as many topics as possible.
 4. Prepare for the town hall meeting
 - a. Prepare beforehand. If you have a question or issue you would like discussed, be sure to know precisely what you are asking and how you are presenting your question or comment.
 - i. Use stories. If you have a personal story that can support your question or concern, share it. Not only will the personal touch lend weight to your question, it may interest other members of the audience as well – providing more pressure for an answer.
 - ii. Use numbers. If you have data to support an argument or concern, use it. As with stories, data will encourage a detailed response, as well as audience interest.
 - b. Having said this, keep your question or comment as short and succinct as possible. Being “long-winded” will annoy your fellow attendees and only encourage the official to move on to the next question quickly.
 - c. Respect everyone in the room. Do not berate a point of view or the official hosting the event. Your argument will lose traction if you appear personally abrasive.
 5. After the town hall
 - a. Officials hosting the town hall are almost always staffed by other people from the official’s office. If you have any “leave-behinds” you would like to share, such as briefing papers or brochures, hand these to staff members. Legislative offices have specific people dedicated to specific issues, and staff will know the best person to filter material to.
 - b. Follow up. Be persistent in your pursuit of a response to your question/issue. Writing to or about an official in the context of something s/he said provides added pressure for an official to act on the issue.

Visits to elected officials

Visiting with your Member of Congress is the best thing you can do to help him or her understand that you care about solving the problem of hunger in the United States. Your elected officials want to hear you. After all, he or she was elected to represent you! An in-person visit lets your elected official know that you care about ending hunger and that you want them to care, too.

According to a recent study, 97% of congressional staff members said in-person visits from constituents had the best chance of influencing a legislator who is undecided on an issue.²³ This presents a great opportunity to impact how our government responds to hunger.



How:

1. Decide who to visit.
 - a. You may visit with your representative (the person from your district elected to the U.S. House of Representatives) or your senator (one of the two people elected in your state to the U.S. Senate). Members of Congress will meet only with their own constituents.
 - b. Find the names, addresses, and phone numbers of your Members of Congress.
 - i. Find your senators (every state has two).
 1. Go to http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm
 2. Choose your state from the menu.
 3. It will return the information for both your state's senators.
 4. Click on the senator's name to go to his/her website. Look for the "Contact" section.
 - ii. Find your representative (every district within a state has one).
 1. Go to <http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>
 2. Put in your ZIP code.
 3. It will return information for your representative.
 - a. If your ZIP code is covered by more than one Representative, it will ask you for your 4-digit ZIP extension or full address.
 4. Click on the representative's name to go to his/her website. Look for the "Contact" section.



2. Decide where to visit.
 - a. Your elected officials will have offices in DC and at home.
 - b. The “Contact” information on her/his website will list all of the office addresses.
3. Decide when to visit.
 - a. Senators and representatives are required to be in Washington, D.C. when Congress is meeting or “in session.”
 - b. You can find out if Congress is in session by looking at the calendar at <https://www.congress.gov/days-in-session>
 - c. If Congress is not in session, you will most likely find your elected officials at their home offices.
 - d. Be flexible. Elected officials usually have lots of demands on their time.
4. Send a letter or e-mail requesting a visit.
 - a. Address your request to the scheduler, the person who handles the elected official’s calendar.
 - b. Make sure you identify yourself as a constituent and include your address.
 - c. Identify anyone else who will be attending the meeting with you.
 - d. Here is a sample letter you might use in your request.

Hello. My name is (your full name) and I am a constituent of Senator/Representative (last name). My address is (your full address). As a constituent, I would like to schedule an in-person meeting with Senator/Representative (last name) at his/her Washington/District office.

There will be (number) of us attending the meeting. We would like to meet on (date). However, I understand the senator/representative has a very busy schedule. I am happy discuss a convenient time for him/her to meet.

I believe the congressman/congresswoman would like to know about our concerns regarding those members of our community who are struggling to feed themselves and their families. We would like to discuss ways the senator/representative can help to make ending hunger a priority issue.

I will call you in a few days about the status of my request. In the meantime, I can be reached at (e-mail) or (phone).

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

5. Once your meeting is scheduled, it helps to be prepared.
 - a. If you are scheduled to meet with a staff member and not the elected official, don’t be discouraged. Creating a relationship with a staff member is just as valuable as meeting with your senator or representative. Elected officials can’t be everywhere and they rely on staff members to keep them informed and help guide their decisions. And since elected officials are very busy, you may be granted a short meeting – sometimes only 10 minutes. That’s okay; the important thing is to get the meeting.

6. Before the meeting
 - a. It's natural to be nervous, but don't worry. Elected officials' offices are friendly and always happy to meet constituents.
 - b. What to say
 - i. You are sharing your story, your thoughts and feelings, so it's best to talk from the heart.
 - ii. Plan to make two or three points about why you care about hunger and what you would like your elected official to do.
 - iii. Keep it simple. You may want to organize your points around these three themes:
 1. How you have experienced or witnessed hunger in your community
 2. Your objection to tolerating hunger in our resourceful society
 3. How you would like your elected official to make ending hunger a priority
 - iv. If you are ready to dig a little deeper on the issue, there are a number of great resources to help you understand the issues. Here are some of the national organizations that regularly do advocacy on hunger related issues. These organizations' websites usually have a "take action" or "advocacy" section.
 1. Alliance to End Hunger www.alliancetoendhunger.org
 2. Bread for the World www.bread.org
 3. Coalition on Human Needs www.chn.org
 4. Feeding America www.feedingamerica.org
 5. Food Research Action Council www.frac.org
 6. RESULTS www.results.org
 7. Share Our Strength www.nokidhungry.org
 8. WhyHunger www.whyhunger.org
7. During the meeting
 - a. Tell your story. Remind yourself that you are the expert on your life and experiences and that will help you speak with confidence.
 - b. Be polite and respectful, even if you disagree with your elected official or feel they aren't doing enough at the moment.
 - c. Let them know that you will be following up to see how they are taking action to end hunger.
 - d. If appropriate, invite the elected official to your community to see some of the challenges or the programs that are working to solve the problem.
8. After the meeting
 - a. Send a thank-you letter. This is also an opportunity to suggest a follow-up action or invitation.



b. Here is a sample thank-you letter:

Hello. I am writing to thank you, Senator/Representative (last name), for meeting with my group on (date). We appreciate the time you took out of your busy schedule to hear our concerns.

We were happy to hear your views on the subject of ending hunger in our community. We remain firmly committed to ending hunger as a priority issue and pledge to support you in this cause.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

c. Plan to follow up to determine how your elected official has addressed your concerns.

Note: A good resource on conducting meetings with your legislator is “Face-to-Face with Congress: Before, During, and After Meetings with Legislators,” Congressional Management Foundation, 2014, <http://www.congressfoundation.org/projects/communicating-with-congress/face-to-face>



Using media to raise awareness

Tweet elected officials

Social media is gaining acceptance and clout as an important tool in the advocacy arena, and Twitter in particular is becoming a great way to publicly contact officials with concerns. More than one-third (42%) of congressional staffers report Twitter is important for understanding constituents.²⁴ Whereas e-mail provides a quick and easy way to send personal messages to elected officials, Twitter provides a means to not only contact offices with concerns, but to also do it in a way that alerts other constituents and campaigners of similar issues.



Keep in mind that you are fairly limited in what you can say through Twitter (140 characters per tweet), but this does not mean your tweet will lack substance.

How:

1. Find your elected official's Twitter handle.
 - a. Most Members of Congress have Twitter accounts that their staff uses to engage constituents, organizations, and others with news and announcements. Twitter has a "Verified Accounts List" of legislators with Twitter accounts at <https://twitter.com/verified/lists/us-congress/members>
 - b. Many state and local legislators and other officials also have Twitter accounts. There may not be a quick and easy list like the U.S. legislature's (above), but many officials' Twitter accounts can be searched on Twitter, a search engine, or through these officials' offices or personal websites.
2. What is your message?
 - a. Clear messages are important. If you are going to put an "ask" in a tweet, make sure you only put one. Don't try to pack too much information in such a limited space.
 - b. Do you want an official to vote for a specific bill? Draft legislation? Simply support an issue? Make the ask clear in the tweet.
 - c. Keep in mind that while you may not always receive a response from an elected official from a tweet, many offices will track how often certain issues are brought to their attention through Twitter. If your tweet is clear about your message and "ask," there is a good chance it is contributing to a conversation in the official's office.



3. Make your tweet eye-catching and interesting.
 - a. You may want to consider tweeting a short fact, followed by an “ask.” This will make the tweet interesting as well as purposeful. For example:
1 in 5 kids in the U.S. will go to bed hungry at some point. @jim_moran, please protect #SNAP funding 2 prevent this injustice!
 - b. You can catch the eye of your target and other Twitter users with a picture or infographic that helps explain your issue and ask. Many advocacy organizations will have pictures and infographics for an issue tailored for social media use.
 - c. Remember that you can provide links to online resources provided by expert individuals and organizations. Link URLs will often contain many characters but can be shortened to a manageable size for Twitter using sites such as bitly.com or ow.ly.
4. Make your tweet relevant and engaging.
 - a. Tying your issue and “ask” to a current event or “trend” will help others find it and make the tweet more appealing. What are the current trending “hashtags” (#)? What current events in the news could you relate your tweet to?
 - b. Know what issues the officials you are targeting find particularly important and make a connection between your issue and theirs.
Thank you @your_rep for your continuing #FiscalResponsibility in Congress. DYK #hunger leads to over \$130 billion/yr??
5. Remember to be grateful.
 - a. Don’t just ask for support on an issue; remember to thank officials for their leadership or support for an issue as well.



Comment on an online article

A good way to dip your toe into “going public” with your views and opinions is by commenting on online news stories and blogs. Think of it as practice for advocating on issues you care about. Most people find the concept of advocating a bit intimidating. They think, “I am not an expert. Who’s going to care about what I say?” But you don’t have to be an expert to share your opinion. And there is a value in not being an “expert.” Most elected officials want to hear what the average person thinks, especially when they are sharing their own experiences.

If you are not ready to sit down with your legislators and tell them what you think, that’s okay. You can join the public discourse on hunger by sharing your opinions online. You can comment on newspapers’ websites or your own social media page.

This will help you find “your voice” and refine your opinions about these issues. Do you think it is acceptable that one in seven households in the U.S. is food insecure? Do you feel we are doing enough as a country to solve this problem? Do you wonder if our priorities are in the right place? Over time, you will develop the confidence you need to engage in advocacy. After all, advocacy is just sharing your opinion with someone who is in a decision-making position.

How:

1. Most online news and opinion outlets allow the public to post comments on new articles for a limited period of time after posting. You may need to subscribe to the site to exercise this option.
2. If you have a Facebook account, you can share articles on your page and include your own commentary.
3. Try to focus your comments on three areas:
 - a. Do you agree or disagree with the conclusions the author is making?
 - b. Why do you agree or disagree? For example, do you have some personal experience or insight on the subject?
 - c. What would you say instead? Or what do you think the author could have considered that he or she didn’t?



Share your story

Your elected officials need to know that you care about ending hunger. If you have experienced hunger (and millions of people in this country have), sharing a personal story of the challenges you have faced helps legislators know that there are real people and families struggling with this issue. Elected officials are offered lots of facts and figures, but it usually takes a personal story for them to understand and emotionally connect with a problem.

If you haven't personally experienced hunger, it is valuable to let your legislator know this is an issue you want them to work on solving. Maybe you know someone who is struggling to put food on the table. Maybe you have volunteered at a food pantry and can talk about your experiences. Telling your legislators why you care about ending hunger will help move them to action.

When you can't visit your legislator in person, using social media to tell your story can be very powerful. We are asking you to share your story using an app called StoryCorps. On March 17, 2015, StoryCorps launched a free app (available at www.storycorps.me) enabling anyone to record interviews that will be archived at the Library of Congress. Those stories can also be shared on the Internet via Twitter, Facebook, and e-mail. The StoryCorps app walks users through an interview by providing easy-to-follow, step-by-step guidelines. The app will guide you through the process of recording and saving your interview. StoryCorps provides a home for the interviews and the opportunity to be archived at the Library of Congress, where it will be available to the public. When sharing your story, it helps to focus on your experiences, how issues affect you or why you support ending hunger.

How:²⁵

1. Download the app from the iTunes store (Apple users) or the Google Play store (Android users) to your mobile device.
2. Create an account at <http://storycorps.me>
3. Before you record your story:
 - a. Plan to speak for three to five minutes. You may want to think about what you will say in advance.



- b. In general, you are lending your voice by sharing your personal story – your struggle to make ends meet – and how nutrition assistance helps/has helped you and your family.
 - i. Questions to consider
 - 1. What struggles have you faced finding healthy food? How have you worked to overcome these struggles? What have been the hardest moments? What have been the moments when it started to feel better?
 - 2. Who has had the biggest impact on you during your struggles getting healthy food?
 - 3. What have your experiences been like with food programs such as SNAP, WIC, the National School Lunch Program, Meals on Wheels, or congregate meals?
 - 4. What do you think would surprise people about your experiences with hunger?
 - 5. What do you do when there is not enough food available?
 - 6. Why do you think it is important to eat healthy food?
 - 7. What hopes and dreams do you have for you and your family?
 - c. Make sure you are using a device with enough memory to save your interview.
 - d. Select a photo of yourself or your family to use with the StoryCorps app.
 - i. When people listen to your story later, this is the photo they will see.
 - e. Find a quiet place to do your recording.
- 4. During the recording
 - a. Start by saying your name, city, and state where you live.
 - b. Tell your story. It might help you to have the questions above with you.
 - c. Be mindful of the time. Try to stay below five minutes.
- 5. After the recording
 - a. Upload the interview to the Internet via the StoryCorps app. You will be asked to include the following:
 - i. Title
 - 1. A good title would be your name, town, state and zip code
 - ii. Key phrase
 - 1. Enter: EndHunger
 - 2. Optional keywords: SNAP, foodstamps, WIC, SchoolLunch, Nutrition, Hunger, SafetyNet, VoicesofHunger, MealsonWheels, SummerMeals
 - iii. A photo of yourself or your family
 - b. Once you upload your story, you will receive a public web link. Keep this information.
 - c. Please send us an e-mail to let us know you posted your story at advocacy@alliancetoendhunger.org and include the public web link.
 - d. Now you can share your story via e-mail, Twitter or Facebook.



Engaging your community

Educate friends and neighbors

The first step toward ending hunger in your community is educating others about both the problem and solutions. “Spreading the word” is what separates simple actions to address hunger from genuine advocacy for a sustainable solution. Educating friends and neighbors does not need to be as awkward as knocking on doors and making calls. Often, education can go hand-in-hand with other actions. The following provides a few ideas on how to go about this. And remember to keep it simple. You don’t need to go through an elaborate process to educate friends and neighbors in your community. There are a few simple things you can do to help get the word around about hunger.

How:

1. Social media
 - a. Post articles to Facebook and Twitter that others may find interesting. Do not, however, accompany the post with condescending or patronizing statements or opinions. You want to be interesting and engaging, not off-putting.
 - b. If you see or hear about a personal story concerning a family or individual in your community struggling with hunger, share it through your social media outlets. Make sure you respect the privacy of the people in the story. Do not use names or other information that may betray this privacy.
 - c. Share your experiences volunteering. Post pictures and statements about work you may have done at a food pantry, soup kitchen, meal-packing event, etc. But, be sure that what you post is about the event more than about yourself. Self-aggrandizing posts will be met with defensiveness more than interest.
2. Invite others to volunteer with you.
 - a. If you are planning to volunteer at a food bank, food pantry, soup kitchen, or other organization or event, let others know and invite them to join you. One of the best ways to educate friends and neighbors about hunger in your community is to show them firsthand.
 - b. With the approval of an organization or event you are planning to volunteer with, help post and/or distribute flyers or other informational materials about volunteer opportunities.



3. Public forums

a. As explained elsewhere in this section, there are often a variety of forums with public officials you can attend, including public town hall meetings. Invite friends and neighbors to join you at these, as they provide an excellent educational opportunity on how hunger is addressed by government. Learn more about this opportunity by reading about town hall meetings in this Advocacy Playbook.

4. Organize an event. It is relatively simple to organize a community event around hunger. Examples of activities you can plan with friends and neighbors could include:

- a. A nonperishable-food drive. Many food banks and pantries will accept donations of nonperishable food items. A food drive that incorporates educational signs or flyers about hunger in the community can both educate and include those who would not always think much about the issue of hunger.
- b. A meal-packaging event. While more complex, organizations will sometimes help you organize meal-packing events to assist children, seniors, and other at-risk groups.
- c. Hold your own public meeting. Convene your local community with your friends and neighbors to discuss how you can collectively do your part to end hunger in your smaller community. Invite public officials (especially local officials) to attend as well.



Volunteer at food pantry or soup kitchen

Food pantries and soup kitchens provide valuable insights into the “frontline” fight against hunger in local communities. Spending time with those in need of assistance, as well as the volunteers who regularly work to meet those needs, will offer insights into the everyday struggle that individuals, families, and communities go through to simply put food on the table.

1. Find a volunteer opportunity.
 - a. There are many nonprofits, houses of worship, companies, and community groups that host food pantries or soup kitchens in communities across the country. If you wish to volunteer, but don't know where to start, you can visit www.foodpantries.org or find your local food bank at www.feedingamerica.org and simply search your local town. If you attend a local house of worship, check if there is an opportunity there as well.
 - b. Contact a food pantry or soup kitchen of interest to see if they are looking for volunteers. While most such places are always searching for volunteers, not all of them are.
 - c. When to volunteer? Most organizations offering food pantries are continuously looking for volunteers. Keep in mind that holidays are often “peak seasons” in which demand is high, and volunteers may be scarce. If you can volunteer during a holiday season, food pantries and soup kitchens will be incredibly grateful. Some pantries and kitchens will also be seeking regular volunteers. If there is a day or two every week in which you have a regular time slot open, this is also often appreciated.
2. What to expect
 - a. Depending on the size and “complexity” of the operation, some food pantries or soup kitchens will offer a quick orientation for volunteers. Smaller community pantries or kitchens may go the route of “throwing you in the mix.” Don't hesitate to ask questions.
 - b. Whether volunteering in a food pantry or soup kitchen, the organization running the event will be very conscientious about safe and sanitary conditions for food handling and distribution. Dress appropriately (sturdy shoes, comfortable clothes). Be prepared to wear gloves and a hair net (usually provided by the pantry or kitchen) whenever handling food.



- c. Be respectful. In small communities, it is possible that you will see someone you know receiving assistance. Be respectful of their privacy. Whether you know those seeking assistance or not, respect should be the ultimate rule. Maintain the confidentiality of all who are seeking assistance.
3. Share your story.
 - a. It is great that you volunteered your time to help out at a food pantry or soup kitchen, but your work doesn't need to end when you leave the building. You now have a valuable advocacy resource: your experience. Share your story with friends, family, and, yes, your elected officials.
 - b. Ask others to volunteer. You will be surprised how many people in your own community are unaware of local needs. Let others know about your experience and urge them to consider volunteering. This is a big step toward building the public will to end local hunger.
 - c. Ask elected officials to volunteer at, or at least visit, a local food pantry or soup kitchen. As with the general community, you may be surprised that your elected officials (member of Congress, senators, state legislators, etc.) know very little about hunger in their state and/or district. Write them about your own experience volunteering, tell them about your terrific eye-opening experience, and encourage them to see hunger in their community with their own eyes.



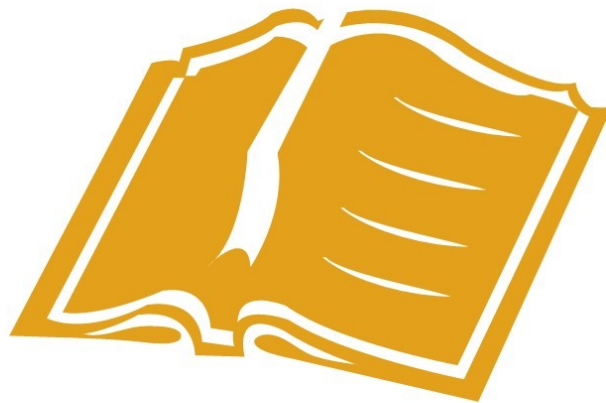
Take the SNAP Challenge

SNAP (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program) is the largest domestic hunger safety net program and offers nutrition assistance to millions of Americans every day. The SNAP Challenge asks you to put yourself in the shoes of one of these low-income Americans who rely on this program to meet their nutritional needs – on the average daily allowance of \$4.15! While taking the Challenge, you will learn how easy it is to come face-to-face with hunger and nutritional inadequacy, gaining a personal understanding of food insecurity. By sharing your experience, you help raise awareness and educate others on what it means to live on SNAP.

How:

1. Figure out how long you will stay with the Challenge. Most end up participating for one week; however, the longer you take the Challenge, the more you will learn.
2. It is encouraged that you document and share your journey while on the Challenge to help raise awareness and to motivate you to see the Challenge through. Think of how you are most comfortable doing so (Facebook, Instagram, blogging, daily e-mails to family and friends, etc.).
3. Each person taking the Challenge must only spend \$4.15/day on food and drink.
 - a. You are not allowed to eat any food that was purchased prior to the start of the Challenge.
 - b. You are not allowed to eat any food that is given to you by family, friends, colleagues, or others.
 - c. You must include any meals that you eat dining out in your daily budget.
4. Keep track of your receipts throughout the week to be sure you are staying on budget.
5. Share your experience with others, including your elected officials, and encourage them to participate!

For more information, please visit the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) website to view their SNAP Challenge Toolkit: http://frac.org/pdf/frac_101_snap_challenge_toolkit.pdf



Engage your house of worship

Every major faith tradition talks about our collective obligations to those less fortunate in our society, particularly the poor and hungry. Compassion and justice are values intrinsic to the major faith traditions in the U.S. Persons of faith can compel elected officials to remember our ethical responsibility to assist those who struggle with hunger. They also lend moral authority to calls for justice to reform the broken systems that allow hunger to persist in this country.

Chances are your house of worship is involved in helping to feed the hungry or meeting some other basic survival need, such as sheltering the homeless. Find out if your faith organization is engaged in advocacy as well. If not, here are resources with simple things you can do to get started moving from hunger relief to advocacy.

How:

1. Christian resources
 - a. Bread for the World
 - i. Through its annual Offering of Letters or Lobby Day, Bread for the World can help your church engage its congregants in advocacy. See <http://www.bread.org/mobilizing-faith-community>
2. Jewish resources
 - a. MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
 - i. Mazon partners with synagogues all over the country to raise awareness about hunger, engage the Jewish in advocacy, and provide educational resources and tools. See <http://mazon.org/take-action#AdvocateForChange>
 - b. Jewish Council for Public Affairs
 - i. JCPA has partnered with Mazon to create a Hunger Seder, which includes teachings that bring issues of hunger to the Seder table. See http://engage.jewishpublicaffairs.org/c/627/p/salsa/web/common/public/content?content_item_KEY=9888
3. Muslim resources
 - a. Islamic Relief USA
 - i. In addition to distributing food to the needy during Ramadan, Islamic Relief USA provides guidance to the faithful on advocacy activities to end hunger. See <http://www.irusa.org/campaigns/ramadan/>



Part 6 Advocacy Activities for Civic Groups

Overview

Collective action can be very potent. Margaret Mead famously said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” This is why civic groups can play a vital role in advocacy to address hunger in the U.S.

In 2013, more than a third of Americans (36%) were involved in a school, recreational, religious, or other civic organization. The most frequent volunteer activities included fundraising or selling items to raise money (25.4%); collecting, preparing, distributing, or serving food (24.2%); providing transportation and general labor support (19.6%); tutoring and teaching youth (18%); mentoring youth (17.3%); and lending professional and management expertise (15%).²⁶

Turning a fraction of this energy to focus on advocacy activities will help to foster long-term solutions to the issues civic groups care most about, such as ending hunger. As respected actors in their communities, religious, social, athletic, and fraternal groups will command the attention of elected officials. And, given their reach, civic groups can engage community members in diverse coalitions around important subjects.

In this section, we outline activities that harness the muscle of civic groups to use collective action to communicate with elected officials and the media and engage the community in advocacy.

This section will cover:

ACTIVITY	LEVEL OF EFFORT	LEVEL OF IMPACT
Communicating with your elected officials		
Arrange a call-in day		★ ★ ★
Organize a letter writing or postcard campaign		★ ★ ★
Encourage legislators to join hunger caucus		★
Using media to raise awareness		
Organize a social media campaign		★ ★ ★
Engaging your community		
Invite hunger activist to address your organization		★ ★
Hold a vigil or prayer service		★ ★
Organize a communal fast		★ ★

²⁶ “Volunteering and Civic Life in America 2014,” Corporation for National and Community Service.

Communicating with your elected officials

Arrange a call-in day

Communicating with your elected officials or legislators is one of the most effective advocacy tools available to you. A phone call is still one of the most effective and personal ways to deliver your message. It lets your legislator know that you care enough to take the time to focus on the issue of ending hunger. In a recent study, 86% of congressional staff members said phone calls from constituents can influence a legislator who is undecided on an issue.²⁷

Arranging a coordinated day to call your elected officials can have a tremendous impact in influencing your legislator. A mass volume of calls brings attention to an issue in a way no single call can. It conveys in a very impactful way the urgency of your desire to end hunger.

How:

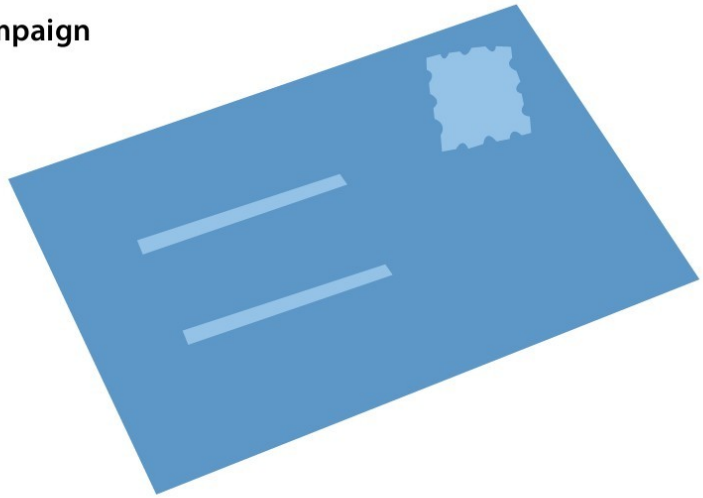
1. Decide who to call. There are a number of different people who can make decisions on the issues you care about. At the federal level, you can call your Senators and/or your Member of Congress (Representative).
2. Find the names and phone numbers of your Senators and Member of Congress.
 - a. Find your Senators (every State has 2)
 - i. Go to: http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm
 - ii. Choose your state from the menu
 - iii. It will return the information for both your State's Senators
 - b. Find your Member of Congress (every district within a State has 1)
 - i. Go to: <http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>
 - ii. Put in your zip code
 - iii. It will return information for your Representative
 1. If your zip code is covered by more than one Representative, it will ask you for your 4-digit zip extension or full address
 - iv. For contact number, find and click on "contact me" link, usually at the top of the Representative's page.



3. Decide when to call. You want to be specific about what date and time to call for a Call-In Day. Remember, a high volume of calls is the goal. Calling during a specific time period will maximize your impact.
4. What to say
 - a. Decide on your message in advance. Everyone should reiterate the same core message. Make sure it is included in the promotional materials for the event.
 - b. Keep your message short and to the point.
 - c. There are a number of great resources to help you understand legislative actions that are needed at the moment. Many times they will include specific language and instructions for how to phrase your message.
 - i. Here are some of the national organizations that regularly do advocacy on hunger related issues. These organizations' websites usually have a "take action" or "advocacy" section that can help you craft your message.
 1. Alliance to End Hunger, www.alliancetoendhunger.org
 2. Bread for the World, www.bread.org
 3. Coalition on Human Needs, www.chn.org
 4. Feeding America, www.feedingamerica.org
 5. Food Research Action Council, www.frac.org
 6. RESULTS, www.results.org
 7. Share Our Strength, www.nokidhungry.org
 8. WhyHunger, www.whyhunger.org
 - d) Spread the word. Create a flyer and post the information on social media. Make sure your group members disseminate the information at home, in their congregations and at work.
 - e) Set up a reminder for the day of the call. This can be done by email or a phone tree.
 - f) Let people know that if the lines are busy when they call, that is a good sign. It means there are lots of calls being made. They should keep calling back until you they get through.
 - g) Celebrate and share your success through social media.

Organize a letter writing or postcard campaign

Communicating with your elected officials or legislators is one of the most effective advocacy tools available to you. Legislators want to hear from the people who live in their districts. After all, he or she was elected to represent you! A visit with your legislator is ideal. But if you can't visit in person, a personal letter or postcard can be an effective way to deliver your message. It lets your legislator know that you care enough to take the time to focus on the issue of ending hunger.



By hosting a letter writing or postcard campaign, you are taking this concept and adding the strength of collective action to create even more impact. The more constituents you can recruit to join your campaign, the louder your voice will be heard!

Make an effort to produce letters and postcards with individual messages from constituents. 90% of Congressional staff members said individualized letters from constituents can influence on a legislator who is undecided on an issue. However, many staffers are suspicious of form letters with identical messages. More than half (53%) of Congressional staff members when surveyed believed that form letters are sent without the constituents' knowledge or approval.³

How:

1. Decide what you want the focus of your campaign to be and determine your specific 'ask' (or goal for the campaign). Some important decisions to make up front:
 - a. Who is your campaign targeting? Are you focusing on just Members of the House of Representatives, Senators or both? Are you focusing your campaign on the legislators of a particular state or region only?
 - b. What are you asking your targets to do through the campaign? Are you trying to raise awareness on the general issue of hunger, or are you attempting to get elected officials to vote a certain way on a specific piece of legislation?
 - i. The more specific you can be with your 'ask', the more impactful your campaign is going to be.
2. Decide on the timeframe of your campaign. Are you planning this to coincide with a specific occurrence (i.e. the timing of a specific piece of legislation, World Food Day on October 16, March for Nutrition during the month of March, the days leading up to Thanksgiving or Christmas, etc.)?



3. Create a toolkit. Toolkits provide content that can be used to maintain consistency in your campaign and give your participants an idea of how to get started. A great example is Bread for the World's Offering of Letters Kit found at <http://www.bread.org/offering-letters>.
 - a. Explain the campaign. Write a couple of paragraphs explaining the rationale of the campaign, what the goals are, and why it is timed the way it is.
 - b. Provide an outline of content with draft language that articulates your ask(s). This will help campaigners keep a constant message—amplifying the voice of your campaign.
 - i. Check the “Write a Letter to Your Elected Official” section in this playbook for more guidance.
 - c. Include instructions on how to access Members of Congress’ mailing addresses:
 - i. You can write your Senators at:
The Honorable (Insert Name)
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510
 - ii. You can write your Representative at:
The Honorable (Insert Name)
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
4. Promote your campaign!
 - a. The more participants writing letters or postcards, the greater impact your campaign will have. Recruit people to participate wherever you can, based on your campaign’s specific goal and targets (family, community, social media, etc.).
5. Ask participants to report back after they’ve sent their letter/postcard, so you can keep track of the total number of letters/postcards sent. Also ask participants to report back if they get any replies. This will help you monitor the overall effectiveness of your campaign.



Encourage legislators to join hunger caucus

Members of Congress serve on multiple committees. If your Member of Congress serves on the Agriculture Committee, the Appropriations Committee or another committee involved in hunger and nutrition, he or she will have the opportunity to participate in making key decisions on federal nutrition programs. In addition, each chamber has a Hunger Caucus, a forum for all Members of Congress to focus on domestic and international hunger and food insecurity issues.

You can ask your Member of Congress to join the Hunger Caucus in their chamber—either the House Hunger Caucus or the Senate Hunger Caucus.

Additionally, you can encourage your legislator to attend important hearings. Legislative hearings are typically held by committees prior to taking action on a bill to allow people representing different stakeholders to state their support or opposition to the bill or request any changes. This is an important opportunity for people who represent the interests of the poor and hungry to make their case.

While most Members will not attend every meeting nor will they necessarily attend the entire hearing, they will often attend and may even ask a question if a constituent or organization in their district asks. Even if the Member isn't able to attend the hearing, your level of interest, attentiveness and engagement on the issue will carry a lot of weight for the Member and staff.

How:

1. Find the committee assignments of your Senators and Representative.
 - a. Find your Senators (every State has 2)
 - i. Go to: http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm
 - ii. Choose your state from the menu
 - iii. It will return the information for both your State's Senators
 - iv. Click on the Senator's name to go to their website. Look for the "Committee Assignments" section.
 - b. Find your Representative (every district within a state has 1)
 - i. Go to: <http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>
 - ii. Put in your zip code
 1. It will return information for your Representative
 - a. If your zip code is covered by more than one Representative, it will ask you for your 4-digit zip extension or full address
 2. Click on the Representative's name to go to their website. Look for the "Committee Assignments" section.



2. Find out when hearings are taking place.
 - a. House* Agriculture Committee Schedule: <http://agriculture.house.gov/calendar/?EventTypeID=214&Timeframe=All>
 - i. *Child Nutrition Reauthorization for 2015 in the House of Representatives is considered in the Education and the Workforce Committee. See the Hearing Schedule: <http://edworkforce.house.gov/hearings>
 - b. Senate Agriculture Committee Hearing Schedule: <http://www.ag.senate.gov/hearings>
3. Sent an e-mail to the Member to let him or her know about the upcoming hearing and of your interest in having him or her attend.
 - a. Highlight the topic and explain why it is important to you.
 - b. Highlight any witnesses who may be particularly interesting to the Member.

Here is an example of a sample e-mail to Congressional staff requesting that the Member attend an important hearing:

Dear Sarah,

It was a pleasure meeting you at Senator Smith's town hall meeting earlier this year. I appreciated the chance to speak with you about my volunteer work with the local food bank and the challenges of ending hunger in Anytown, USA.

On Thursday, May 7 at 10 AM EDT, the Senate Agriculture Committee will hold its first hearing on reauthorization of the Childhood Nutrition Reauthorization bill. My colleague, John Brown, Executive Director of XYZ food bank will be testifying on the importance of summer meal programs.

We are grateful that Senator Smith serves on this important committee that has oversight of the Childhood Nutrition Reauthorization. This legislation is crucial to us all who feed the hungry children in our communities. It would be very beneficial to have Senator Smith in attendance to hear the importance of looking for ways to expand access to the summer meal program.

Thank you so much for your support. I hope you can visit our food bank the next time you are in Anytown.

Sincerely,



Using media to raise awareness

Organize a social media campaign

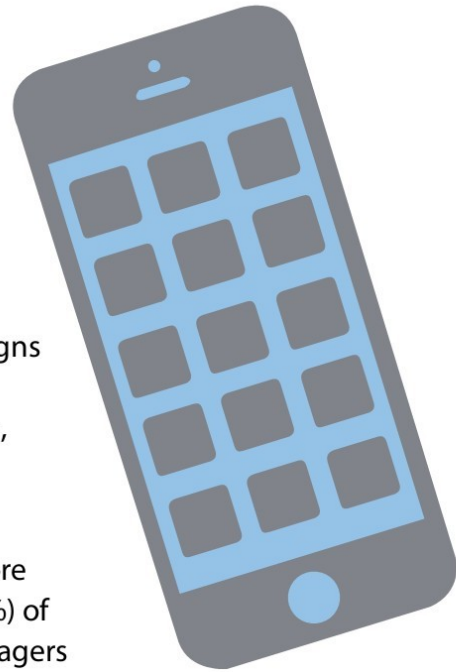
Millions of individuals and organizations use social media on a daily basis. The power social media provides to spread the word on various aspects of life and society continues to increase. Social media campaigns offer a relatively easy way to show support for a specific issue, policy, or event. Social media campaigns typically combine an array of media: from pictures and infographics, to predesigned Facebook and Twitter posts, to blogs and other websites.

The Congressional Management Foundation reports Congressional offices are using social media more and more to help understand public opinion. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of the Congressional senior managers and social media managers surveyed think Facebook is a somewhat or very important tool for understanding constituents' views and opinions, 42% say Twitter is somewhat or very important, and 34% say YouTube is somewhat or very important tool for understanding constituents' views and opinions.²⁹

The following provides a brief overview of why you may want to develop a social media campaign, and how you can make it effective.

How:

1. Before you jump into organizing a social media campaign, consider the following first:
 - a. Does a similar campaign exist already? Don't fall into the trap of 'recreating the wheel.' If another individual or organization is planning a similar campaign, work to promote the existing campaign. This will help raise the profile of the campaign by increasing the possibility of 'trending' or 'going viral' on social media.
 - b. What exactly is your goal (your 'ask')? There are a couple of considerations here.
 - i. What are you asking campaigners to do? If you are planning to mobilize a network of campaigners in addition to your in-house media team, your social media campaign should be simple and straightforward for those interested in supporting your effort. An easy way to lay this out is through a social media toolkit (see below).
 - ii. Who is your campaign targeting, and what are you asking them to do through the campaign? Are you simply trying to raise awareness of the general population for a general issue? Are you attempting to get elected officials to vote a certain way on a specific piece of legislation?



- c. What platforms are you planning to utilize? Facebook? Twitter? LinkedIn? Instagram? There are a lot of options, and some may be more relevant to your organization and target audience than others. In the advocacy world, elected officials typically have a presence on multiple platforms, but do a little reach ahead of time.
 - d. What is your timeframe? Social media campaigns, like other campaigns, usually have a start and end date. Are you planning your campaign to coincide with an occurrence (World Food Day on October 16, March for Nutrition during the month of March, the days leading up to Thanksgiving or Christmas, etc.)? Plan your activities through a calendar.
2. Decide which aspects are appropriate for your campaign. Your campaign should be interesting, colorful, and thought-provoking. Consider the following elements for your campaign.
 - a. Pre-drafted posts and tweets.
 - b. Infographics.
 - c. Pictures.
 - d. Links to relevant posts and websites.
 - e. Fact sheets.
 3. Create a Social Media toolkit. A great way to promote a social media campaign, or even guide an in-house media team, is to develop a social media toolkit. Toolkits provide content that can be cut and pasted to Twitter, Facebook, and other social media sites. Toolkits help to increase the ability of a social media campaign to trend and 'go viral' by decreasing the amount of work individual campaigners need to do while still maximizing social media presence.
 - a. Explain the campaign. Write a couple of paragraphs explaining the rationale of the campaign, what the goals are, and why it is timed the way it is.
 - b. Provide a day-by-day outline of social media content with pre-created tweets, pictures, infographics, etc.
 - c. Be sure to promote a 'hashtag' or two for use throughout the campaign. Encourage campaigners to use the hashtag whenever they promote their own similar content (articles, blog posts, etc.).
 4. Continuous engagement throughout campaign
 - a. If you notice certain organizations or individuals consistently interacting with your content ('retweeting,' sharing, liking, 'favoriting,' etc.), thank them through social media. Make sure to recognize and encourage your supporters.
 - b. Target individuals or organizations you specifically want to have a role in the campaign. You should utilize their specific Twitter handle to 'tag' them in posts.

A great additional resource to learn tips, tricks, and best practices around social media campaigns is www.socialmediaexaminer.com.

Engaging your community

Invite hunger activists to address your organization

Understanding the reality and extent of hunger in your community can be a powerful incentive in moving your civic group to engage in advocacy. People are motivated to action when they feel a personal stake in an issue. A local hunger activist can help you understand who and why people are hungry in your community. They can also share information about current efforts underway to help these people.

The face of hunger is often hidden in our communities. It isn't always apparent who might struggle with occasional hunger. Most people are surprised when they find out that hunger lives close to home. With more than 1 in 7 Americans at-risk for hunger, chances are you know someone who is affected.

Many people are reluctant to engage in "advocacy." It sound like something you need a law degree to do. But it just comes down to speaking up, to helping your neighbors. A local hunger activist can help you understand the simple steps (such as those outlined in this playbook) that your group can take to address the problem of hunger.

How:

- 1) Find a local hunger organization. There are probably lots of people in your community who can speak to your group. You may want to start with your local food bank, food pantry or soup kitchen or other food distribution program.
 - a) Feeding America will help you find your local food bank.
 - i) Go to <http://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank/> and enter your zip or state to find your nearest food bank.
 - ii) Your food bank can direct you to a local food distribution organization.
 - b) National Hunger Clearinghouse will help you find local food distribution agencies.
 - i) Go to www.nhc.fns.usda.gov/nhc/find-meals and click on "find meals"
 - ii) Enter your city, state and zip to receive a list of organizations in your locality.
 - c) Faith-based organizations are also a good place to look.
 - i) Contact a local church, mosque or synagogue and ask if they operate a social justice or feeding program.
 - d) Social service organizations that help low-income people can help.
 - i) United Way Worldwide operates 211, an information service for local resources.
 - ii) Go to <http://211.org/>
 - iii) Select "food" from the services menu at the top of the page.
 - iv) Enter your zip code or city and state and click "search"
 - v) It will return a list of social service organizations in your community.
- 2) Identify someone to speak to your group. Call the organization and ask who you can invite to come to speak to your organization about hunger in your community and how your group can engage in advocacy. It's helpful to let them know about your group and its members.
- 3) Engage in an advocacy activity as part of your meeting such as calls, tweets or emails.



Hold a candlelight vigil or prayer service

Bringing together community members to reflect and affirm their desire to end hunger can be an inspiring way to raise awareness and spur action. Depending on your group you can make this a religious, interfaith or secular event. However you organize it, this kind of collective action makes a powerful symbolic statement about your beliefs and values as well as brings attention to the issue of hunger.

How:

1. Decide on the theme and program.
 - a. Define a theme for your vigil. The message should be simple and aspirational, such as “Ending Hunger in our Time.”
 - b. Decide what type of a gathering you will host. Secular, interfaith or faith-based?
 - c. Keep the speaking part of the program short. This is a time for reflection and prayer.
 - d. Whether or not your vigil is religious, you should create a sense of ceremony and solemnity. For example, you can create a sense of ceremony by having each participant light their candle at a central location.
 - e. Here are some helpful resources for poems, prose and prayers to use at your vigil:
 - i. Christian prayer resources from Bread for the World, <http://www.bread.org/pray-end-hunger>
 - ii. Muslim prayer resources from Islamic Relief USA, <http://www.irusa.org/campaigns/ramadan/>
 - iii. Jewish prayer resources from Mazon, <http://mazon.org/jewish-social-justice/hunger-and-jewish-texts/>
 - iv. Interfaith prayer resources from World Food Day USA, <http://www.worldfooddayusa.org/faith>
 - v. Secular resources from People for Peace, <http://www.betterworld.net/quotes/endhunger-quotes.htm>
2. Invite your speakers.
 - a. Engaging someone who is inspirational and has community roots will lend credibility to your efforts.
 - b. Designate a Master of Events to guide participants through the program.
3. Choose a location.
 - a. Select a location that is well-known and easily accessible. Typically, vigils are held outdoors. Find out if you need a permit to gather in your preferred location.



- b. Consider having an in-door location available in case of bad weather.
4. Choose a date and time.
 - a. Select a convenient time for your event. Avoid holidays and scheduling during business hours.
 - b. If it's a candlelight vigil, you want to hold it after dark but not so late that security becomes a concern.
5. Inform the community
 - a. Invite the media.
 - i. Prepare a media advisory.
 1. A media advisory invites media outlets to cover the vigil by simply conveying the relevant information such as Who, What, When and Where.
 - ii. Build your media list. Include television, radio, print and social media.
 - iii. Send the media advisory one week in advance.
 - iv. Follow up your media advisory with phone calls to confirm they received it.
 - b. Invite the community.
 - i. Prepare outreach flyers
 - ii. Develop a plan to encourage community participation.
 - iii. Distribute flyers to the community one month in advance.
 - c. Use social media for outreach
 - i. Post information on Facebook, Twitter, community bulletin boards and other social media outlets.
6. Recruit volunteers to help with logistics
 - a. You should create a program that lists the speakers and includes any songs, prayers or prose you would like the group to recite.
 - b. It helps to have volunteers or staff assist with organizing everyone on the day of the event. Some key tasks include:
 - i. Greeting guests and distribute programs
 - ii. Interfacing with the media
 - iii. Having guests sign a guest book
 - iv. Distributing candles
7. Follow up.
 - a. Thank the speakers.
 - b. Blog or post information about the event on social media.
 - c. Engage people who attended event by adding to your distribution lists and inviting to future events/activities.



Organize a communal fast

Ritual fasting has been part of religious traditions for thousands of years. Fasting, abstaining from all food and drink except water, in the social justice tradition has long been used as a means of protest or to bring attention to an injustice. This extreme form of protest can be very effective in raising awareness to the cause of hunger as it allows for greater empathy with those who are not able to eat through no choice of their own.

A communal fast, bringing together community members to participate in a fast, can help to raise awareness of hunger in your community and the country. In 2011, Ambassador Tony Hall led a fast to protest harmful budget cuts to programs that alleviate hunger. His personal sacrifice and call to action resulted in people of conscience forming a “circle of protection” around programs benefitting the most vulnerable people in America and around the world.

How:

1. Deciding to fast.
 - a. The decision to fast should not be made lightly. You may want to consult your physician, particularly if you have a known medical condition, are pregnant or breastfeeding.
 - b. If you decide to fast, the good news is that our bodies are designed to withstand periods of abstinence from food. WebMD.com states, “Fasting for a few days probably won’t hurt most people who are healthy, provided they don’t get dehydrated.”
2. Decide on the start date and duration of your fast.
 - a. For people unaccustomed to fasting, you may want to fast for a relatively short period of time, like 1 to 3 days.
3. Invite participation from the community.
 - a. Let people know why you are fasting. Ask them to join you or support your cause.
4. Inform the media.
 - a. Prepare a media advisory.
 - i. A media advisory invites media outlets to cover your fast by simply conveying the relevant information such as Who, What, When and Where.
 - ii. Build your media list. Include television, radio, print and social media.
 - iii. Send the media advisory a day or two in advance.
5. Keep people informed via social media.
 - a. Use social media to keep people informed of your progress.
 - b. Relate your experiences to people who struggle with hunger every day.

6. Gather to affirm your commitment.
 - a. Those participating in the fast may want to gather to express their commitment to ending hunger.
 - i. If you gather at the beginning of the fast, this is a good opportunity to invite the media to express your reasons for fasting and to bring attention to the cause of ending hunger.
 - ii. If you gather as you break the fast, you may want to have a communal meal where you share your experiences and engage others in your cause.
 - b. This is a great opportunity to affirm your commitment to ending hunger and discuss what you learned and how to keep attention on the issue.
7. Follow up
 - a. Blog or post information about the event on social media.
 - b. Engage people who attended event by adding to your distribution lists and inviting to future events/activities.



Part 7 Advocacy Activities for Anti-Hunger Organizations

Overview

Organizations at the front lines of hunger relief play an important role in our society. Food distribution programs provide a safety net that help families and individuals keep hunger at bay. Community-based organizations help connect families at-risk of hunger to public benefits, like SNAP and WIC, to move them along a path to self-sufficiency.

Feeding America reports 46.5 million people, including 12 million children and 7 million seniors, turned to its members for food in 2013.³⁰ This network of 58,000 pantries, meal service programs, and other charitable food programs across the country has tremendous reach.

For anti-hunger organizations, your assessment of the experience of hunger in your community can make you a credible advocate. When coupled with stories from your clients, who can speak to their individual experiences, you have a significant contribution to make in swaying elected officials to the cause of ending hunger. You can connect legislators to the full extent of hunger in your community and speak to the broader issues and needs in a persuasive manner.

Furthermore, most anti-hunger organizations rely heavily on volunteers. In an average month there are almost 2 million volunteers helping to distribute food across the country. This averages about 16 volunteers per program per month. Given your position in the community, your ability to call forth volunteers and community members to advocacy is unparalleled.

In this section, we outline advocacy activities for organization's like yours that focus on the strength of your witness, your power to convene and your ability to command the attention of the media.

This section will cover:

ACTIVITY	LEVEL OF EFFORT	LEVEL OF IMPACT
Communicating with your elected officials		
Add your organization's name to a sign-on letter	ⒾⒾ	★
Invite your legislator to visit your organization	ⒾⒾ ⒾⒾ	★ ★ ★
Testify at a public hearing	ⒾⒾ ⒾⒾ	★ ★ ★
Arrange a lobby day	ⒾⒾ ⒾⒾ ⒾⒾ	★ ★ ★
Using media to raise awareness		
Write a letter to the editor	ⒾⒾ ⒾⒾ	★ ★
Issue a press release	ⒾⒾ ⒾⒾ ⒾⒾ	★ ★
Hold a press conference	ⒾⒾ ⒾⒾ ⒾⒾ	★ ★ ★
Engaging your community		
Screen "A Place at the Table"	ⒾⒾ	★ ★
Organize a town hall meeting	ⒾⒾ ⒾⒾ ⒾⒾ	★ ★ ★

³⁰ Feeding America, "Hunger in America 2014."

Communicating with your elected officials



Add your organization's name to a sign-on letter

Adding your organization's name to a sign-on letter or petition is an easy way to support a position or piece of legislation. Your organization may not have the capacity to research and analyze proposed legislation and policy issues. Signing on to a letter from a reputable organization with expertise in hunger issues is a good way to get involved in advocacy while building your knowledge base.

For the organization generating the letter, being able to demonstrate broad support will enhance their ability to advocate for supporting nutrition programs and ending hunger. Moreover, it strengthens that organization's position to be recognized among community members as a leading advocate on hunger issues.

How:

1. How do you find out about sign-on opportunities? There are a number of national organizations that regularly do advocacy on hunger related issues. These organizations' websites usually have a "take action" or "advocacy" section. By joining their email lists, you will be keep informed of any sign-on or advocacy opportunities. You will usually be able to sign-on online.
 - a. Alliance to End Hunger, www.alliancetoendhunger.org
 - b. Bread for the World, www.bread.org
 - c. Coalition on Human Needs, www.chn.org
 - d. Feeding America, www.feedingamerica.org
 - e. Food Research Action Council, www.frac.org
 - f. RESULTS, www.results.org
 - g. Share Our Strength, www.nokidhungry.org
 - h. WhyHunger, www.whyhunger.org
2. Here is an example of a petition, circulate by Food Research Action Council (FRAC) on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).



Invite your legislator to visit your organization

Having your Member of Congress visit your food bank, food pantry or other nutrition assistance program is a wonderful opportunity to educate him or her on the realities of hunger in your community. It is a time to go beyond rhetoric and statistics and see firsthand the families and children struggling with this issue.

For most elected officials (like most of us) hunger is an invisible problem. We can't see into people's pantries or refrigerators or know what they are or aren't eating. Hungry people look just like me and you. Most people who are struggling with or are at-risk for hunger do not advertise their predicament. Since they are also less likely to vote and engage in advocacy, legislators do not get many chances to meet them or hear about their problems.

Organizations and schools that are participating in federal nutrition programs have a unique opportunity to help bridge this divide by bringing elected officials face to face with their food-insecure constituents.

How:

1. Invite your Member of Congress
 - a. Find the names and contact information for your Senators and Member of Congress.
 - i. Find your Senators
 1. Go to: http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm
 2. Choose your state from the menu
 3. It will return the information for both your State's Senators
 - ii. Find your Member of Congress
 1. Go to: <http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>
 2. Put in your zip code
 3. It will return information for your Representative
 - a. If your zip code is covered by more than one Representative, it will ask you for your 4-digit zip extension or full address
 - b. Send a letter or email requesting a visit from your legislator.
 - i. Address your request to the Scheduler, the person that handles the elected official's calendar.
 - ii. Make sure you identify yourself as a representative of the legislator's constituents and include information about your organization, address and hours of operation.
 - iii. Explain the purpose of the visit and any opportunities to meet constituents or participate in activities such as share in a congregate meal, serve meals at a soup kitchen, pack pantry bags, etc.
 - iv. Send the invitation at least a month in advance.
 - c. Follow-up with a phone call to confirm receipt of your invitation.

2. Prepare for the visit.
 - a. Engage the media.
 - i. Ask the legislator's staff if they would like a media presence during the visit.
 - ii. Coordinate with the legislator's office on outreach to media, such as creating a media advisory.
 - b. Engage your staff and clients.
 - i. Make sure everyone knows who will be visiting and why since the visit will likely disrupt normal operations.
 - ii. Identify any clients in advance who may want to respond to questions from the media.
 - iii. Identify locations for photo opportunities. Arrange for a photographer and/or videographer to shoot the visit.
 - iv. Get photo releases from any clients who might be photographed or videotaped. This is primarily to respect the right of privacy of the individual being photographed or videotaped. The act of getting the release will inform the person of what is happening and give them an opportunity to opt out of photographs.
 1. For anyone who does not feel comfortable being photographed ask if they would be willing to provide information anonymously as background information for reporters.
 - c. Plan a short program.
 - i. There is no need for an elaborate program if you are giving the legislator a tour of your facility and demonstrating your programs.
 - ii. However, be mindful to structure the visit to highlight what you want the elected official to learn from the visit. For example, if you want to demonstrate the level of need in your community, make sure to invite him or her during your food distribution times.
 - d. Prepare an informational packet.
 - i. Be sure to include information about your organization, its clients and impact, as well as, information about hunger in your community.
3. During the visit.
 - a. Welcome and introduce the legislator to your staff/clients.
 - b. Share the information you prepared.
 - c. Engage the legislator in any activities you have planned.
 - d. Encourage interaction with your program participants. Quiet opportunities for the legislator to have one-on-one conversations with your clients may be helpful.
 - e. Take photos or capture video.
4. After the visit.
 - a. Send a thank you letter to the legislator.
 - b. Post information on the visit in your newsletter, on your webpage and social media.
 - c. Maintain a relationship with the legislator. Let him or her know about new developments and events



Testify at a public hearing

Before a legislative body votes on a bill, they will typically hold a public hearing to allow people to state their support or opposition to the bill or request any changes. Testifying at a legislative hearing gives your anti-hunger organization an important opportunity to share your views directly with elected officials who will be making decisions that may reduce or increase hunger in your community.

The other benefits of public hearings are that they get your position in the official public record. And, if your legislature broadcasts its hearings, you will reach a larger audience of people concerned about hunger in your community. Testifying at public hearings can also lend your organization greater legitimacy in decision-making venues.

The best reason to testify at a public hearing is to ensure the perspectives of people who struggle with and are at-risk for hunger are represented at the hearing. As an organization that works to end hunger in your community you have an important message to share. This is also a great opportunity to encourage one of your program's clients to testify as well. You might want to consider giving joint testimony.

There are two types of testimony, oral (spoken) and written. Please be mindful there are many different reasons why you may not get to make an oral statement—such as time restrictions on the hearing or an attempt by officials to hear a diverse set of opinions or representatives of different sectors. However, you can usually submit written testimony for the official record of the hearing. If you do get to present a spoken statement, it should be accompanied by a written statement as well.

How:

1. Check the rules for testifying with the legislative body in question.
 - a. The rules for testifying at a hearing vary from place to place.
 - b. At the city, county or state level, it is usually a matter of identifying the hearing, arriving in advance and signing up to testify. Check the rules in your locality.
 - c. Congressional hearings are only open to invited speakers.
2. Preparing testimony.
 - a. Oral testimony should be brief- usually 2 or 3 minutes. It is best to prepare your written testimony and select the highlights for your oral testimony.
 - b. Introduce yourself. Let the officials know why your opinion on this issue matters. If you have first-hand or front-line knowledge, mention it.
 - c. Focus on the piece of legislation or question the committee is considering. Be sure to state your position, for or against, and why.

- d. Make recommendations as to how the committee should act to improve the situation.
3. Prepare copies of your written testimony. You will want to have enough copies for each member of the committee and key staff members.
4. Use your speaking time to summarize your points. The committee members have your written testimony for more detail.
5. After your time is up, officials may have questions for you. If you don't know an answer, say so. Then, if possible, find the answer and get back to the committee chairperson.
6. Thank the committee for the opportunity to speak.

Notes on Congressional hearings:

Legislation related to nutrition and hunger issues are typically taken up by the standing committees on agriculture. One of the best ways to stay up to date on federal hearings is to sign up for the committee's newsletter. Their websites will list upcoming committee meetings and usually link to a live webcast of the event.

- In the Senate, it's the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry at <http://www.ag.senate.gov/>.
- In the House of Representatives*, it's the Committee on Agriculture at <http://agriculture.house.gov/>.

* *Child Nutrition Reauthorization in the House of Representatives is considered in the Education and the Workforce Committee at <http://edworkforce.house.gov/>.*

While opportunities to testify before these committees are typically limited by invitation, you can send a written statement of your organization's position on an issue to the committee chairperson.



Arrange a lobby day

In-person communication with your elected officials or legislators is the most effective advocacy tool available to you. When groups of people are organized to visit their legislators on the same day, discussing the same topic, the impact can be profound. A lobby day, while requiring careful planning, can pay great dividends in letting your legislator know that you care about ending hunger, represent lots of folks who feel the same way and are organized!

When you organize your lobby day, consider carefully who you will invite to participate. Make sure you are only including constituents of the Member of Congress. Ideally, you want to include people who can talk from their personal experience about the issue of hunger in your community. According to a recent study, 97% of Congressional staff members said in-person visits from constituents had the best chance of influencing a legislator who is undecided on an issue.³¹

Additionally, include in your group people who represent different sectors of your community, for example, faith and business leaders. 96% of congressional staff members said visits from constituent who represent other constituents were very influential as well. Finally, keep the group for each office visit small (around four people) and ask one or two people to speak for the group.

How:

1. Decide where to visit.
 - a. You can hold your lobby day on Capitol Hill in Washington DC or your Member of Congress' district office.
 - b. There are pros and cons to holding your lobby day in Washington DC versus your home districts. A lobby day on Capitol Hill has the advantage of bringing the group together to allow you to stage your event. You might consider a briefing with all participants before the visit. It also makes a big impact when you see a group lobbying on the Hill. However, a lobby day in Washington DC may involve complicated logistics and transportation costs. A visit to the Member of Congress' home office can alleviate the cost of transportation but will have a more diffuse impact.
2. Decide when to hold your lobby day.
 - a. To have the biggest impact, you want to select one day to target your group's efforts.
 - b. Senators and Representatives are required to be in Washington, DC when Congress is meeting or "in session." You can find out if Congress is in session by looking at the calendar at <https://www.congress.gov/days-in-session>
3. Decide which Members of Congress to visit.
 - a. While any Member of Congress will be receptive to your concerns, you may want your group to target certain Members of Congress in addressing your issue.
 - b. For food and nutrition issues, Members of the following committees may be appropriate targets:
 - i. Senate: Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee and Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee

³¹ "Communicating with Congress: Perceptions of Citizen Advocacy on Capitol Hill," Congressional Management Foundation, 2011.

- ii. House of Representatives: Agriculture Committee and Education and the Workforce Committee
4. Find the names, committee affiliations and addresses of your Senators and Member of Congress.
 - a. Find your Senators
 - i. Go to: <http://www.senate.gov/senators/contact/>
 - ii. Choose your state from the menu
 - iii. It will return the information for both your State's Senators
 - b. Find your Member of Congress
 - i. Go to: <http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>
 - ii. Put in your zip code
 - iii. It will return information for your Representative
 1. If your zip code is covered by more than one Representative, it will ask you for your 4-digit zip extension or full address
 - iv. For contact number, find and click on "contact me" link, usually at the top of the Representative's page.
5. Send a letter or email requesting a visit on the assigned Lobby Day
 - a. Address your request to the Scheduler, the person that handles the elected official's calendar.
 - b. Make sure you identify yourself as a constituent and include your address
 - c. Explain the purpose of the Lobby Day and identify anyone else who will be attending the meeting with you.
6. Assign a point person for each office visit. This person should be a constituent of that Member of Congress.
7. Request an appointment on the assigned Lobby Day at least one month in advance.
 - a. Here is a sample letter you might use in your request.

Hello. My name is (your full name) and I am a constituent of Senator/Representative (last name). My address is (your full address). As a constituent, I would like to schedule a meeting with Senator/ Representative (last name. at his/her Washington/District office. I would like to schedule the meeting on (date of lobby event) as part of a lobby day hosted by (name of organization sponsoring the event).

There will be (number) of us attending the meeting. I believe the Congressman/Congresswoman would like to know about our concerns regarding those members of our community who are struggling with hunger. We would like to discuss ways the Senator/Representative can help to make ending hunger a priority issue.

I will call you in a few days about the status of my request. In the meantime, I can be reached at (email) or (phone).

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,
8. Follow up to confirm your appointment with the office scheduler.

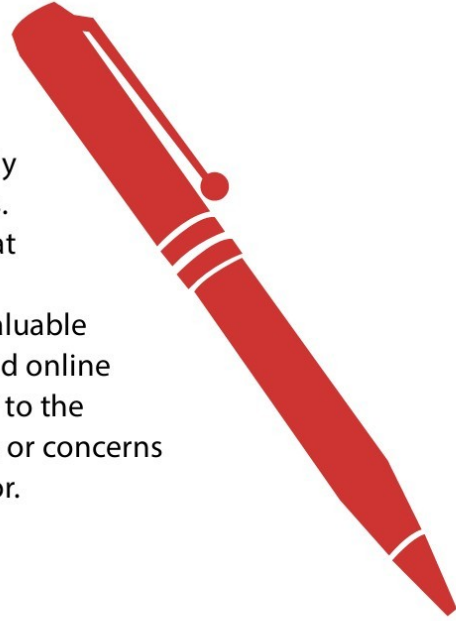


9. Before the Lobby Day.
 - a. Planning your message.
 - i. Decide on your message in advance. Everyone should reiterate the same core message. Create a one-page document to leave behind at the office.
 - ii. There are a number of great resources to help you understand legislative actions that are needed at the moment. Many times they will include specific language and instructions for how to phrase your message.
 1. Here are some of the national organizations that regularly do advocacy on hunger related issues. These organizations' websites usually have a "take action" or "advocacy" section that can help you craft your message. Additionally, many of these organizations host their own lobby day for you to participate in.
 - a. Alliance to End Hunger, www.alliancetoendhunger.org
 - b. Bread for the World, www.bread.org
 - c. Coalition on Human Needs, www.chn.org
 - d. Feeding America, www.feedingamerica.org
 - e. Food Research Action Council, www.frac.org
 - f. RESULTS, www.results.org
 - g. Share Our Strength, www.nokidhungry.org
 - h. WhyHunger, www.whyhunger.org
 - b. Create lobby day packets.
 - i. For participants, include contact name and numbers, schedule, maps, talking points and sample thank you letter. Member bios and photos are also helpful.
 - ii. For Members of Congress include a one-pager with your message, information about your group and a contact list of participants, if appropriate.
 - c. Arrange for volunteers to help with logistics
 - d. Send out press release to inform the media of your lobby day. Make sure to include a list of your issues and persons capable of responding to media inquiries.
10. During the Lobby Day
 - a. If you have an opportunity to meet as a group before the visits, do so. This will help get everyone on the same page and motivated for the visit.
 - b. Split everyone up into groups by Member office. This will allow everyone to meet if they haven't done so.
 - c. Make sure that volunteers are available to assist individuals with directions.
 - d. Have a contact person on duty to help anyone with questions, directions or concerns.
11. After the Lobby Day
 - a. Send thank you letters to legislators, staff and other participants.
 - b. Issue a press release or use social media to share your experiences

Using media to raise awareness

Write a letter to the editor

Letters to the Editor allow people to engage meaningfully in conversations around hunger and poverty in the news. Every once in a while, you may run across an editorial that you find exceptionally important, insightful, or perhaps misguided. Your experience fighting hunger gives you valuable insights into the needs of your community. Both print and online newspapers often provide opportunities to write a letter to the editor that will allow you to publically voice your insight or concerns about an article, issue, or even another letter to the editor.



How:

1. Decide if you should write a letter to the editor.
 - a. Do you have a unique insight or story? Writing a letter to the editor offers a unique opportunity to respond to an issue in an article that you find exceptionally relevant or important. If you have a personal story or experience with the issue in question, this will give your letter credibility, and in turn, value.
 - b. Personal opinions and feelings are a part of letters to the editor, just as the op-eds or editorials you are responding to often contain. However, letters to the editor are not intended for mere venting or personal attacks on the author (slander).
 - c. Letters to the editor are not free advertising. While you may have a product or service relevant to a topic discussed in an article, letters to the editor are not an opening for self-promotion.
2. Does a publication allow letters to the editor?
 - a. Most local newspapers accept and even encourage letters to the editor in response to an editorial posting or other articles in their publications. Letters to the editor will typically be found in the editorial/op-ed section of a paper or website.
 - b. National publications such as the Washington Post and New York Times also accept letters to the editor. Keep in mind that widely-read national publications will receive hundreds, or even thousands of letter submissions a week. If your goal is to make an impact on an elected official, local and/or state papers are the way to go.
3. How to write a letter to the editor.
 - a. Many publications will offer guidance on writing letters to the editor. A few tips to keep in mind include:
 - i. Keep it short. Most letters to the editor should only be a couple hundred words max.



- ii. Keep it relevant to the publication. While letters to the editor may cover a wide array of issues, they typically respond to an article or editorial produced by the publication being written to. Letters to the editor should also be timely by responding to an article that was very recently published.
 - iii. Make it insightful. Publications may receive numerous letters regularly. In order for your letter to be considered for publication, try to offer a unique insight or special expertise if you can.
 - iv. Keep it respectful. You may be responding to an editorial or other opinion piece that you do not agree with. Offer your own opinion or information that clarifies your point of view without antagonizing others. You can be thought-provoking without being provocative.
- b. Process—Publications vary in their processes for submission procedure, acceptance, and publication of letters to the editor. Typically, the process resembles the following:
- i. Submission – Publications may have an online submission form for letters to the editor. This will be commonplace in large publications, but may be an option in your local publication as well. There will likely also be an e-mail option. Remember to read the instructions. In print papers, there may be instructions in the letters to the editor section of the paper, or at least an email address to reference. Online publications will typically have an instruction page.
 - ii. Acceptance – After submitting your letter, publications often reserve the right to edit your submission, typically for grammar, spelling, and ‘succinctness.’ But keep in mind that editors will not typically go out of their way to work with you to come up with an acceptable submission. (Remember, letters to the editor are rarely longer than 200 or so words).
 - iii. Publication – Smaller, ‘hometown’ publications will often inform you if your letter has been selected for publication. Larger publications may not contact you at all, given the sheer volume of submissions they receive.



Issue a press release

A press release is an important way to broadcast news and events related to your efforts to fight hunger through the media. Have you completed an important milestone, released a new report or conceived of a new initiative or event? These are good opportunities to issue a press release.

A press release that is picked up by the media is a great way of raising awareness of your organization's work to end hunger with minimal effort. For this reason, it is worthwhile to build your capacity to connect your news stories to the media. Once you build credibility with your local media outlets, it will be easier to get your news out.

How:

1. Write the release.
 - a. PR Newswire offers these tips for the content of Corporate press releases, you might find helpful:
 - i. Attention-Grabbing Headline
 1. With so many information sources available, the first challenge is to stand out from the competition and win the attention of readers. In a few words, explain the topic and why it's beneficial to the reader. Include a teaser as well to generate curiosity and motivate readers to find out more.
 - ii. Short and Concise Content
 1. According to the National Center for Biotechnology Information, the average attention span of a human being is 8 seconds. To help ensure that your message is absorbed by readers, keep press releases brief and to the point. Also, summarize all pertinent points in the first few sentences. More detail can follow in the body paragraphs of the press release.
 - iii. Compelling Quotes
 1. To support your cause as well as make it more personable and powerful, add a quote. The type of quote chosen will depend on the intended outcome of the press release. Your business could incorporate a quote from the spokesperson of the brand to enhance the significance of the news or include a testimonial from a customer to legitimize the company's claim.
 - iv. Beneficial Resources
 1. Supply readers with outlets that provide additional information and encourage them to learn more. Include links to both your business website and other sites that offer useful content on the topic. Additionally, include a boilerplate with the basics about your company as well as your company contact information.³²
2. Send the press release.
 - a. PR distribution agencies.
 - i. There are many reputable news companies that will send your press release to local, regional or national media for a fee. Fees range but for local media you might find the fees very reasonable.



³² <http://www.prnewswire.com/knowledge-center/>

- b. Do it yourself- build your media list.
 - i. Make a list of the TV, Radio and Newspapers in your locality.
 - ii. Go to the websites of these media outlets.
 - iii. Build your media list from information found there. Usually there is a “Contact Us” or other section with instructions for submitting news. Alternatively, you can call the news outlet and ask who you can email your press release.
 - c. Choose a date and time.
 - i. In general, press releases should be sent on weekdays. Monday and Tuesday are usually busy news days, consider later in the week to get the attention of journalists. If you send it on a Friday, which may be a good option because it is typically a slower news day, make sure to work the phones to bring attention to it.
 - ii. You may send your release at any time, however sending it in the morning will allow you to be included in the afternoon or evening news. Given that major news stories will occupy the early morning; you may want to consider sending it around 9:30 AM or 10:00 AM so as to not get lost in the shuffle.
 - d. Send email.
 - i. Email is preferred but don’t send attachments. Copy and paste your release into the body of the email. Most email outlets don’t accept emails with attachments for security purposes.
3. Post the press release on your website and social media outlets as well.

Additional tips for writing press releases can be found at <https://ireach.pnewswire.com/tips.aspx>.



Hold a press conference

A press conference is a special event where you call on media outlets to convene at a place and time of your choosing for an announcement or issue briefing. A successful press conference can be a very impactful way of getting your message across and raising awareness for ending hunger. This can also provide good exposure for your organization.

Since a press conference is interactive you can get across more information than simply issuing a press release. For this reason, it is important that you have a significant story for the media before organizing a press conference. Press conferences are also good ways to generate publicity for your group and solidify media contacts by establishing your organization as an expert in the eyes of the media.

How:

1. Decide on your message.
 - a. You should hold a press conference to announce a newsworthy event. Releasing a new report, announcing a new program initiative or partnership and highlighting accomplishments are good opportunities to hold a press conference.
 - b. Define a clear theme. Think of this as the headline you would like to see in the news report.
2. Invite your speakers.
 - a. You should select people who are knowledgeable about the issue and comfortable fielding questions from the press.
 - i. This is a great opportunity to invite people affected by the issue to participate. Be sure to explain that they may be asked questions by the media and may be photographed and/or videotaped. If they are not comfortable with this, ask if they are willing to provide background information to reporters anonymously.
 - b. Select people with integrity and credibility as they will be seen as spokespersons for your organization or cause.
 - c. Designate a moderator. This person will open the press conference, introduce speakers and manage the question and answer session.
 - d. Remind your speakers to focus on a few key points and to speak no longer than 3-5 minutes each. A conference call or meeting with participants in advance will help to ensure all the important points are covered and that speakers are complementing each other.
3. Choose a date and time.
 - a. In general, press conferences should be scheduled in the morning to be included in the evening's news cycle. Ideally, between 10:00am and 11:00am in the middle of the work week work best.



4. Choose a location.
 - a. Select a location that is easily accessible.
5. Prepare a media advisory.
 - a. A media advisory invites media outlets to cover the press conference by simply conveying the relevant information such as Who, What, When and Where.
6. Invite the media
 - a. Build your media list. Include television, radio, print and social media.
 - i. Make a list of the TV, Radio and Newspapers in your locality.
 - ii. Go to the websites of these media outlets.
 - iii. Build your media list from information found there. Usually there is a "Contact Us" or other section with instructions for submitting news. Alternatively, you can call the news outlet and ask who you can email your media advisory.
 - b. Send the media advisory one week in advance.
 - c. Follow up your media advisory with phone calls to confirm they received it.
7. Prepare a press release and press packet
 - a. The press release should explain your group's position and highlight the points made at the press conference, including quotes from key participants.
 - b. The press packet should also include:
 - i. A list of press conference participants with biographies and contact information.
 - ii. Any background information you want to share about the issue.
 - iii. Information about your organization such as a mission statement.
8. Prepare the location.
 - a. Make sure there is a table or podium with a microphone and enough room to stage television cameras.
 - b. Be mindful of the visual. Have your organization's logo or banner strategically placed in the background.
 - c. Provide enough seats for participants and journalists.
9. Plan to record the press conference for your records.
 - a. This can become an important training tool.
 - b. This will help resolve any questions of people being misquoted in print, if necessary.
10. Ask journalists to sign in upon arrival.
 - a. This will help you to follow up with journalists. You want to take the opportunity to develop relationships beyond this one event.
11. Send press packets to media outlets that did not attend the press conference.

Engaging your community

Screen “A Place at the Table”

“A Place at the Table,” a powerful documentary film released by Magnolia Films and Participant Media in 2013 explores hunger in the United States.

“... Directors Kristi Jacobson and Lori Silverbush examine the issue of hunger in America through the lens of three people struggling with food insecurity: Barbie, a single Philadelphia mother who grew up in poverty and is trying to provide a better life for her two kids; Rosie, a Colorado fifth-grader who often has to depend on friends and neighbors to feed her and has trouble concentrating in school; and Tremonica, a Mississippi second-grader whose asthma and health issues are exacerbated by the largely empty calories her hardworking mother can afford.

Ultimately, A Place at the Table shows us how hunger poses serious economic, social and cultural implications for our nation, and that it could be solved once and for all, if the American public decides — as they have in the past — that making healthy food available and affordable is in the best interest of us all.”³³

This film provides an excellent opportunity to get people involved in advocating against hunger.

How:

1. Get the film.
 - a. A Place at the Table is widely available on DVD, Blu-Ray, iTunes, Amazon, Netflix and On Demand.
 - b. You can purchase the DVD at Magnolia Pictures <http://www.magnolia.com/aplaceatthetable/> or Participant Media <http://www.takepart.com/place-at-the-table/film>.
2. Find a location to screen the film.
 - a. You may have a conference room or other space at your organization where you can show the film.
 - b. Consider partnering with school or library that has an auditorium where you can show the film.
3. Plan a discussion and/or advocacy activity following the film.



- a. Immediately after the film is a great time to have a short discussion or program to share your organization's efforts to end hunger and/or engage in an advocacy activity such as a letter writing campaign.
- i. TakePart, the social action platform of Participant Media, has an action center with suggestions from Bread for the World, Feeding America, Food Research Action Center (FRAC) and Share Our Strength at <http://www.takepart.com/place-at-the-table/take-action>.



Organize a town hall meeting

Town hall meetings are a great way to educate and engage your community on the issue of ending hunger. A telephonic or webinar town hall meeting is a good option when you want to engage an audience that is geographically disperse or in times of inclement weather. This is an opportunity for community members to connect with elected officials and issue experts. It is a good way to assess how community members feel about the issues you care about and solicit ideas from community members about to solve the problems.

Town hall meetings are a very good opportunity to include persons participating in nutrition assistance programs, either as invited speakers or audience members. Your promotion efforts for the event should be sensitive to reaching people unlikely to attend town hall meetings by working through local social service, faith or community-based organizations.

Inviting media to your town hall meeting will increase attention and awareness to your issue. These events are usually attractive to local media given the community-wide nature of the event.

How:

1. Decide on the theme.
 - a. Define a clear theme. It helps to focus your town hall meeting on one subject, such as “Ending Hunger by 2030.” It should be broad enough to be compelling to a cross-section of your community.
2. Decide on the format.
 - a. You can be very creative with how you organize the town hall meeting. Your format should promote the kinds of interaction you are trying to achieve.



- b. The most common format is a briefing by a panel of three to five people and a moderator. The panel discussion usually takes at least half of the time and a question and answer period then the rest of the time. The public and elected officials are the primary audience for this kind of format.
3. Invite your speakers.
 - a. You should invite people who are knowledgeable about the issue and comfortable engaging in discussion with community members and the media.
 - b. Carefully select a moderator. This person will introduce speakers, manage the question and answer session and generally serve as a master of ceremonies. A well-known and well-respected community member is a good choice.
 4. Choose a location.
 - a. Select a location that is well-known and easily accessible to the public. You want to make sure the site is wheelchair accessible. Make sure there is enough seating for community members. You might consider space at a school or library.
 5. Select a conference call provider (for a telephonic or webinar meetings).
 - a. If you are organizing a tele-town hall, you will need to advertise a conference call number. Two good options are Freeconference.com and Freeconferencecall.com since they offer free, basic conference call services accommodating up to 1,000 callers.
 - i. You may want to inform callers of a tele town hall that this will not be a toll-free call.
 - b. Webinar hosts can be found at gotomeeting.com, clickwebinar.com, Adobe Connect, and elsewhere.
 6. Choose a date and time.
 - a. Select a convenient time for your event. Avoid holidays and scheduling during business hours.
 7. Prepare outreach materials
 - a. Prepare media advisory.
 - i. A media advisory invites media outlets to cover the town hall by simply conveying the relevant information such as Who, What, When and Where.
 - ii. Build your media list. Include television, radio, print and social media.
 - iii. Send the media advisory one week in advance.
 - iv. Follow up your media advisory with phone calls to confirm they received it.
 - b. Prepare outreach flyers
 - i. Have a plan to encourage community participation.
 - ii. Distribute flyers to the community one month in advance.
 - c. Use social media for outreach
 - i. Post information on Facebook, twitter, community bulletin boards and other social media outlets.

8. Prepare materials to distribute at the meeting.
 - a. Plan to distribute information about your speakers and any positions you are taking.
9. Ask volunteers to help with logistics
 - a. It helps to have volunteers or staff assist with organizing everyone on the day of the event. Some key tasks include:
 - i. Greeting guests
 - ii. Registering guests & media
 - iii. Distributing materials
 - iv. Directing guests throughout the facility
10. Follow up
 - a. Thank the speakers, moderator, elected officials and community participants.
 - b. Blog or post information about the event on social media.



Part 8 Resources

US HUNGER STATISTICS

- Feeding America provides local community hunger statistics
<http://map.feedingamerica.org/>
- FRAC (Food Research and Action Center) conducts research, analysis and recommends legislative actions to reduce hunger
www.frac.org
- Share Our Strength explains economic impact of hunger
<http://www.nokidhungry.org/problem/economic-impact>
- US Department of Agriculture measures Food Security in the United States
<http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics.aspx>

FEDERAL NUTRITION PROGRAM INFORMATION

(FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE OF THE USDA)

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>
- The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/women-infants-and-children-wic>
- School Feeding (Breakfast, Lunch, Summer)
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/child-nutrition-programs>

LOCAL FOOD ASSISTANCE

- Feeding America's guide to locating local Food Banks
<http://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank/>
- Homeless Shelter Directory (HSD) provides an Emergency Food Program site guide
<http://www.homelesshelterdirectory.org/foodbanks/>
- Online local food pantry finder
www.foodpantries.org

- United Way provides an online and phone service for those in need to find local resources <http://211.org/>

CONGRESS—GENERAL INFORMATION (CONGRESSIONAL WEBSITES)

- Congressional Calendar
<https://www.congress.gov/days-in-session>
- Find your Member of the House of Representatives
<http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>
- Find your Senator
http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm
- The Congressional Management Foundation (*webpage dedicated to communications with Congress*)
<http://www.congressfoundation.org/projects/communicating-with-congress/face-to-face>

TAKE ACTION RESOURCES

- SNAP Challenge information from FRAC
http://frac.org/pdf/frac_101_snap_challenge_toolkit.pdf
- Hunger Walk Information (Church World Service):
 - <https://www.crophungerwalk.org/>
- Food Packaging Organizations:
 - Outreach, Inc.
<http://www.outreachprogram.org>
 - Stop Hunger Now
<http://www.stophungernow.org>
- Story Corps
<http://storycorps.me>



- A Place at the Table movie resources:
 - TakePart
<http://www.takepart.com/place-at-the-table/film>
- TakePart Action Center
<http://www.takepart.com/place-at-the-table/take-action>
 - Magnolia Pictures
<http://www.magpictures.com/aplaceatthetable/>

ADVOCACY

The following national organizations recommend advocacy activities related to hunger and food insecurity.

- Alliance to End Hunger
www.alliancetoendhunger.org
- Coalition on Human Needs
www.chn.org
- Feeding America
www.feedingamerica.org
- Food Research Action Center
www.frac.org
- RESULTS
www.results.org
- Share Our Strength
www.nokidhungry.org
- WhyHunger
www.whyhunger.org

FAITH ENGAGEMENT RESOURCES

- Christian:
 - Bread for the World church engagement
<http://www.bread.org/mobilizing-faith-community>
- Prayer guide
<http://www.bread.org/pray-end-hunger>
- Jewish:
 - MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
<http://mazon.org/take-action#AdvocateForChange>
- Jewish Texts guide
<http://mazon.org/jewish-social-justice/hunger-and-jewish-texts/>
 - Jewish Council for Public Affairs
http://engage.jewishpublicaffairs.org/c/627/p/salsa/web/common/public/content?content_item_KEY=9888
- Muslim:
 - Islamic Relief USA Ramadan guide
<http://www.irusa.org/campaigns/ramadan/>
 - 'Why Islam?'
<http://www.whyclam.org/social-values-in-islam/interfaith-action-on-hunger-a-shared-obligation/>



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Part 10 Glossary

Some Important Terms to Better Understand the Issue of Hunger

ADVOCACY: The act of supporting, or recommending. Taking action to influence a decision.

FOOD SECURITY: Access by all people, at all times to sufficient food for an active and healthy life. Food security includes at a minimum: the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and an assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways. Conversely, 'food insecurity' refers to lack of such access.

FOOD WASTE: Food waste is a component of food loss and occurs when an edible item goes unconsumed, as in food discarded by retailers due to color or appearance and plate waste by consumers.

HUNGER: Not having enough to eat to meet energy requirements. Hunger can lead to malnutrition, but absence of hunger does not imply absence of malnutrition.

MALNUTRITION: A condition resulting when a person's diet does not provide adequate nutrients for growth and maintenance or when a person is not able to adequately utilize the food consumed due to illness. Malnutrition encompasses both undernutrition (too thin, too short, micronutrient deficiencies) and 'overnutrition' (overweight and obesity), which should actually be considered 'unbalanced nutrition' as it often co-occurs with micronutrient deficiencies.

MICRONUTRIENT DEFICIENCY: A lack or shortage of a micronutrient (vitamins or minerals) that is essential in small amounts for proper growth and metabolism. People are often said to suffer from "hidden hunger" when they consume enough calories, but suffer from micronutrient deficiencies. This form of hunger may not be visibly apparent in an individual, but it increases morbidity and mortality and also has negative impacts on other aspects of health, cognitive development and economic development. Hidden hunger affects over 2 billion people worldwide.

OBESITY: Increase in body weight as the result of an excessive accumulation of fat in the body. Often defined as a Body Mass Index greater than or equal to 30.

SERVICE: An act of helpful activity; help; aid.

UNDERNOURISHMENT: An indicator of inadequate dietary energy intake (based on FAO's definition of hunger, characterized as consuming less than a minimum level of kilocalories) that is assessed at the population level using national food balance sheets to determine the supply of dietary energy available to a given population and modeling of how that energy is distributed across the population.

UNDERWEIGHT: A low weight-for-age measurement calculated based on comparing the weight-for-age of a child with the WHO international growth reference. Underweight reflects both stunting and wasting.

Sources: United States Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Library, World Food Programme and dictionary.com



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