

CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA FOOD BANK

No one should be hungry

Centre County Community Hunger Mapping Final Report

Identifying Localized Food Access Gaps and Increasing Understanding of Intersecting Issues for the Charitable Food System

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centralpafoodbank.org

Introduction

In 2024, one in eight residents of Centre County was unsure where or how they would get their next meal.



Nearly 20,000 people, including more than 3,500 children, experienced food insecurity at some point during the year. The heavy weight of food insecurity is not evenly distributed across the county; though it burdens residents of every community in Centre County, including members of the university community centered in State College, the degree to which it does so varies substantially by demography, geography, and an array of other contributing factors.

This Community Hunger Mapping report seeks to understand the dispersion, experiences and root causes of food insecurity within and across Centre County. Community-engaged methods were used throughout the research process so that food insecurity and the charitable food system's response to it could be accurately and compassionately described in this document.

The perspectives of neighbors facing food insecurity as expressed through surveys conducted at food pantries across the county are emphasized.

Listening sessions and agency surveys enabled the inclusion of the views of charitable food providers across the county as well. Central Pennsylvania Food Bank (CPFB) researchers visited several pantries in the county that did not host neighbor surveys in order to collect additional observational data and ensure that the charitable food network could be depicted holistically.

Quantitative analysis of secondary data from both public and private sources, such as the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and CPFB's own internal records, is included throughout to contextualize the qualitative and primary data.

This mixed-methods process allows the final product to provide a comprehensive view of the Centre County charitable food landscape. However, this project aims to go beyond increasing understanding of food insecurity in Centre County, though that is in itself a useful goal.

Rather, it seeks to guide lasting and meaningful improvements in the experiences of food insecure neighbors while simultaneously making progress toward ending hunger in the future. Therefore, this document contains a number of specific, detailed, and actionable recommendations that, if implemented collaboratively by food pantries, social service organizations, health systems, and other stakeholders throughout and beyond Centre County, can help us together build a county where no one goes hungry.

The main research questions that this report seeks to answer are as follows:



What is the extent of food insecurity in Centre County, and where in the county is it concentrated?



Who in Centre County is most impacted by food insecurity? How do food insecurity rates and the main drivers of food insecurity differ by age, race and ethnicity, or other factors?



How accessible is charitable food throughout Centre County, and how does access vary in different areas of the county? How does access vary, if at all, by demographics?



What barriers do neighbors face in accessing charitable food services? Where do food distribution and access gaps exist in Centre County? What is the neighbor experience at food pantries like?



What are utilization rates of key government nutrition-related assistance programs, and how do they vary across the county? What is the charitable food system's role in this space?



What other issues impact food insecurity in Centre County? What can the charitable food system and other relevant stakeholders do to better address the root causes of food insecurity?

Executive Summary

Working to End Hunger in Centre County

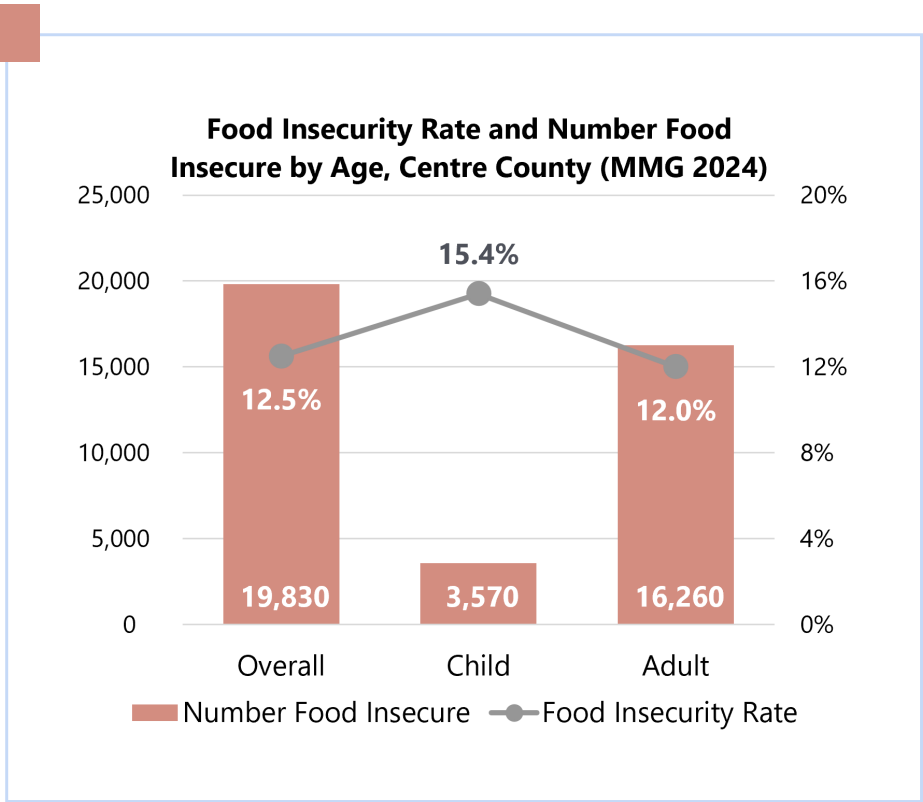
Food insecurity affects one in eight residents of Centre County (12.5%) as of 2024, the most recent year for which Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap estimates are available. In total, just under 20,000 people lacked consistent and reliable access to the food they needed to live an active, healthy life, including one in six children (15.4%). This means that more than 3,500 children were food insecure in the county in 2024.

The magnitude of food insecurity across not only Centre County, but also the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the United States as a whole, makes it one of the most pressing issues faced by many communities as well as the nation at large.

Food insecurity affects every neighborhood and community in Centre County, as demonstrated by census tract level food insecurity estimates for 2023. This data, which aligns well with municipal and neighborhood boundaries in Centre County, showed that food insecurity's prevalence at a subcounty level ranged from a low of 4.5% in central Ferguson Township to 20.2% in Patton Township.

Other areas with elevated food insecurity rates include the eastern portion of Ferguson Township, Bellefonte borough, and Philipsburg borough and adjacent parts of Rush Township.

It should be noted that because of the presence of Penn State University's main campus in State College and the large population of students in the area, Feeding America does not generate food insecurity estimates for many census tracts, which limits analysis in some ways.



This report attempts to overcome these data limitations by discussing the difference between the estimated countywide total food insecure population and the aggregate total of the food insecure population in tracts for which estimates are available.

Food insecurity is an increasing challenge in Centre County, as it is across the state and country. Food Insecurity has steadily increased across all age groups since 2021, when food insecurity hit a low point as a result of robust government support to vulnerable families as part of pandemic response, such as SNAP Emergency Allotments and the Expanded Child Tax Credit.

More than three in ten (31%) pantry visitors in Centre County reported experiencing very low food security.

Very low food security is the most severe form of food insecurity and is characterized by a regular reduction in the quantity of food consumed due to a lack of funds to buy more. Very low food security is the closest measure of hunger, so this finding means that almost a third of the county's pantry visitors often go hungry despite utilizing charitable food assistance.

Aligning with the overall county data, households with children are by far the most prone to experience severe food hardship, as more than two in five households with children (44%) screened positively for very low food security. On the other hand, one in four senior households (27%) reported facing very low food security. There was not sufficient data to assess very low food security rates for adult households without children.



The bulk of this report analyzes three distinct but interconnected approaches that stakeholders in the charitable food system and other community stakeholders invested in reducing food insecurity across the county can leverage as a means of alleviating hunger in Centre County. These three approaches to reduce very low food security are listed below; each is discussed in turn and in detail.

1 Approach 1: Strengthening and increasing the accessibility of the charitable food system

2 Approach 2: Encouraging robust participation in key government nutrition programs

3 Approach 3: Addressing upstream and intersecting issues that cause food insecurity

As an international student, I greatly appreciate the support of this pantry. It has given me the peace of mind of being able to obtain quality food and better manage my limited budget."

- Neighbor Survey Respondent (translated from Spanish).

Approach 1: Strengthening and Increasing Accessibility of the Charitable Food System

Centre County's charitable food network demonstrably reduces hunger across the county. Households who visit food pantries more often over the course of a year are less likely to experience very low food security than those with similar incomes who visit less frequently.

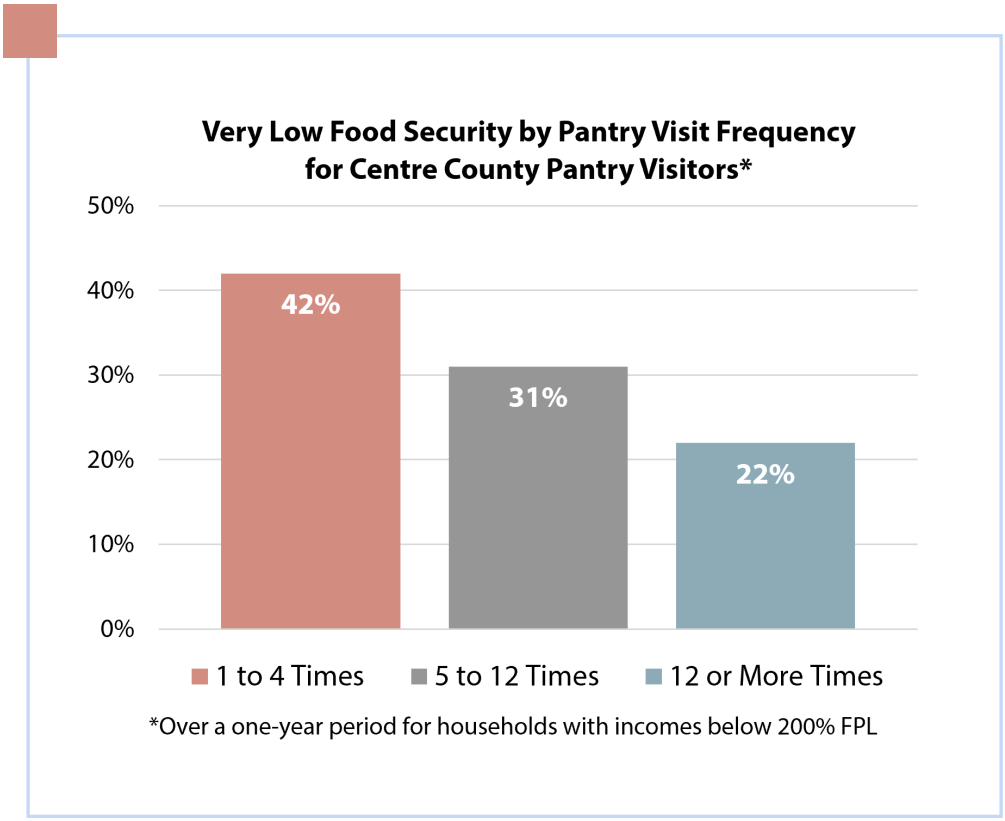
As shown in the chart at right, the positive effects of the Centre County charitable food system are largest for low-income households who can visit food pantries more than once per month on average.

Survey participants who visited food pantries more than once per month have a food insecurity rate that is 48% lower than those who visited quarterly or less; this means that additional visits can cut hunger in half.

Similarly, very low food security rates were 29% lower among households who visited more than once per month than among those who visited more than quarterly but less than monthly (5-12 times a year).

The Centre County charitable food network's impact on hunger is bolstered by several key strengths.

- *Geographic pantry access is strong, as fully 96% of food insecure residents of the county live in census tracts within 15 minutes of two or more pantries, which is excellent access compared to the fifteen other counties where CPFB has already completed Community Hunger Mapping projects.*



Furthermore, two thirds of survey participants reported receiving food they want "often or aways" when they visit food pantries, including many neighbors who stated that food pantries helped them eat healthier. While there is still room to improve, these robust food offerings are of particular importance given the high rate of chronic health conditions observed among pantry visitors in Centre County.

Lastly, very few neighbors reported experiencing judgment while utilizing a food pantry, at just 3% of all surveyed households.

OPPORTUNITIES TO MAXIMIZE IMPACT

The significant and varied strengths of the charitable food system in Centre County form a solid foundation upon which to improve food access. There are four primary tactics that food pantries and other stakeholders can utilize to further maxmize the charitable food network's positive impact on county residents. Each is addressed in turn below.

APPROACH 1.1: SIMPLIFY INTAKE PROCESSES AND REQUIREMENTS TO LOWER ACCESS BARRIERS.

Many pantries across Centre County have intake policies that reduce food access and are not compliant with USDA or Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture regulations for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and the State Food Purchase Program (SFPP). For instance, several pantries require the provision of proof of income, copies of leases/rental agreements, or referrals from other agencies as a precondition to service.

At one pantry, researchers observed a neighbor being required to verify their monthly income by calling their bank prior to receiving food. A completed self-declaration of need form is the sole piece of documentation necessary to receive food at TEFAP or SFPP-participant agencies according to Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture guidance. Additional proof of what is self-declared on the form may never be required.

While pantries may ask other questions in order to improve their services or help connect neighbors to other resources, these should be clearly optional and may not be required to receive food.

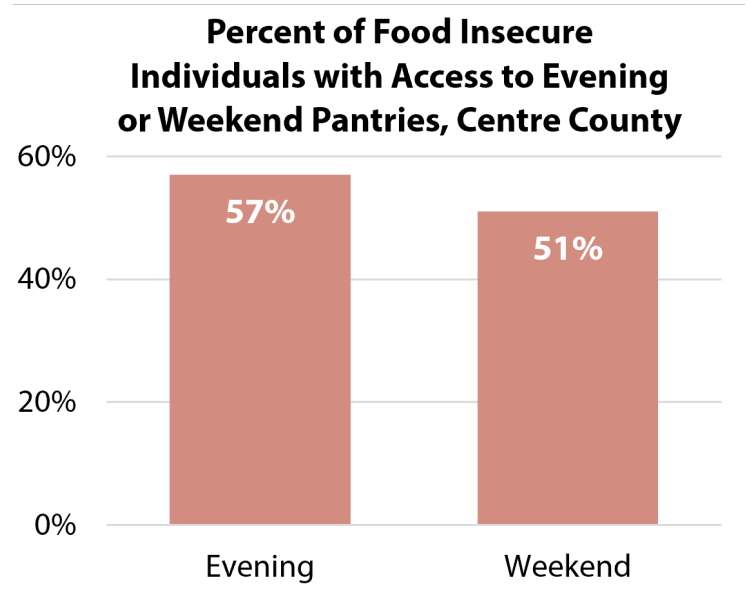
Most pantry visitors stated that they had positive interactions with the charitable food system in Centre County. This is excellent and means that charitable food providers in Centre County already strive to treat every neighbor they serve with respect.

Simplifying intake will further improve pantry experiences by ensuring that the charitable food system can reach everyone who needs help, without deterring anyone because of onerous administrative burdens.

APPROACH 1.2: INCREASE OFF-HOURS ACCESS, INCLUDING EVENING AND WEEKEND DISTRIBUTIONS.

Only about half of Centre County's food insecure individuals who reside in census tracts for which specific estimates are available can reach a weekend or evening food distribution within a 15-minute drive time.

Off-hours distributions are crucial because households with children are the most likely to have reported experiencing very low food security, with rates of 44% compared to 31% among all pantry visitors.



Households with children were also the most likely to report working full time, which often means that these households are unable to visit daytime pantries.

One in five households with children (19%) reported trouble accessing pantries due to their hours, compared to one in fourteen total pantry visitors (7%). It is important to note that this one in five proportion was found among households who were surveyed at a pantry; this therefore means that those with the largest barriers to pantry access were not represented at all.



APPROACH 1.3: WORK TO REDUCE WAIT TIMES AMONG PANTRY VISITORS RECEIVING FOOD.

Two in five households reported waiting more than an hour to get food from their local pantry. This is the highest rate observed among the counties for which Community Hunger Mapping projects have been completed to date. One contributing factor to these long waits may be the high prevalence of drive-through pantries in the county. Only three in ten (28%) of pantry visitors in Centre County who went to a choice pantry waited longer than an hour, compared to almost half (46%) of pantry visitors who were surveyed at a drive-though pantry. The frequency of pantry opening times may play a role as well, as many pantries in Centre County are open only once or twice a month.

Reducing wait times is a challenging goal for pantries, as wait times result from a complex intersection of several elements as well as each neighbor's own independent decisionmaking. Contributing factors include pantry-level issues like traffic control, distribution frequency, food availability over the course of the distribution, staff and volunteer capacity, and available waiting facilities (or lack thereof) as well as exogenous ones like weather, visitor travel time and distance, and visitor ability and willingness to wait.

The fact that not all aspects that contribute to wait times are within the control of the pantry increases the challenge of addressing them, but it also creates opportunity for pantries and the charitable food system to experiment with a variety of solutions and leverage collective knowledge to make future improvements.

APPROACH 1.4: INCREASE PUBLIC INVESTMENTS IN CENTRE COUNTY CHARITABLE FOOD PROVIDERS TO ENSURE ADEQUACY OF SERVICE.

Federal funding for charitable food providers has dropped by more than 50% in recent years; simultaneously, direct governmental supports for households in programs like SNAP and the expanded child tax credit have decreased as well. This reduced investment in food assistance programs in combination with significant cost inflation has led to higher food insecurity rates and record numbers of visits to food pantries, despite fewer available resources.

In Centre County, SNAP participation dropped 11.3% between January 2025 and May 2026, while federal food availability to the charitable food system fell by half. While the Commonwealth has increased charitable food funding within the last year, this only helped make up for about a quarter of the loss in federal support. Collective advocacy for additional support from all levels of government will be critical to ensuring that Centre County food pantries have enough resources to serve everyone who comes to their doors in search of help moving forward.

Approach 2: Encouraging Robust Participation in Key Government Nutrition Programs

Federal nutrition programs, including SNAP, WIC, school meal programs, and summer meal programs, all play key roles in supporting food insecure Americans. Centre County has abundant federal summer meal offerings compared to most other counties in which CPFB has completed Community Hunger Mapping projects. While opportunities to increase access remain, most notably in Port Matilda, this is a key strength.

Moreover, Centre County has school breakfast and lunch participation rates that are higher than the statewide averages.

One strength of Centre County is the fact that more than three quarters of county schools (75.6%) offer an alternative breakfast model.

Given these strengths, the primary opportunity to increase breakfast participation even further is to increase implementation of the "breakfast in the classroom" service model – just one in eight Centre County schools (12%) offers this model, and utilization of this model is associated with the highest participation rates in Centre County and beyond.

In light of Centre County's successes in child nutrition, the primary opportunities to ensure that more Centre County residents receive all supports for which they are eligible are through outreach for SNAP and WIC, which are respectively the largest and third-largest federal nutrition assistance programs in the nation.

APPROACH 2.1: COMMUNITY-BASED SNAP OUTREACH TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION

Working to increase SNAP participation in Centre County is the most considerable opportunity to meaningfully reduce food insecurity in the county. SNAP outreach and application assistance is essential in the context of the increased administrative burdens and benefit cuts enacted by the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) in July 2025, which drove an 11.3% drop in Centre County SNAP participation over the last year.

SNAP is the largest and most effective nutrition assistance program in the nation and will remain so despite these cuts. CPFB SNAP outreach in Spring 2026 may have helped stem the tide of falling participation in Centre County, as a small rebound occurred in this time frame; these efforts should continue and grow.

Centre County ranks 56th of the 67 counties of Pennsylvania in family SNAP participation, which is a key measure that excludes college students not living with relatives. Some SNAP outreach methods that can reach Centre County residents include targeted efforts in high-priority areas identified via geographic gap analysis and community location-based outreach at programs where many visitors may be eligible for but not receiving SNAP, independent of their area of residence. Priority areas in Centre County include ZIP Code 16803 in State College as well as ZIP Code 16841 in the Howard area.

All pantries, regardless of location, are potentially effective locations for SNAP outreach, as only 46% of pantry visitors participate in SNAP.

There are major opportunities to boost uptake among pantry visitors with children, as a minimum of seven in ten (69%) survey respondents with children are likely income-eligible for SNAP, but only half (52%) participate.



APPROACH 2.2: WIC OUTREACH IN HIGH-PRIORITY AREAS

Similar to SNAP, Centre County has one of the lowest WIC participation rates in the state, ranked 55th of 67 counties. There are four ZIP Codes, all of which lie in the northern part of the county, in which child WIC participation gaps are sizable and where targeted program outreach may be effective.

These ZIPs include include 16823 in Bellefonte, 16841 in Howard, 16866 in Philipsburg, and 16872 in Rebersburg. As with SNAP, pantry visitor participation in WIC is low; only half (50%) of likely-eligible household reported participation.

Because WIC is effectively targeted towards one of the household types most at risk for food insecurity – low income households with small children – working to increase WIC uptake should be a priority for stakeholders across the county.

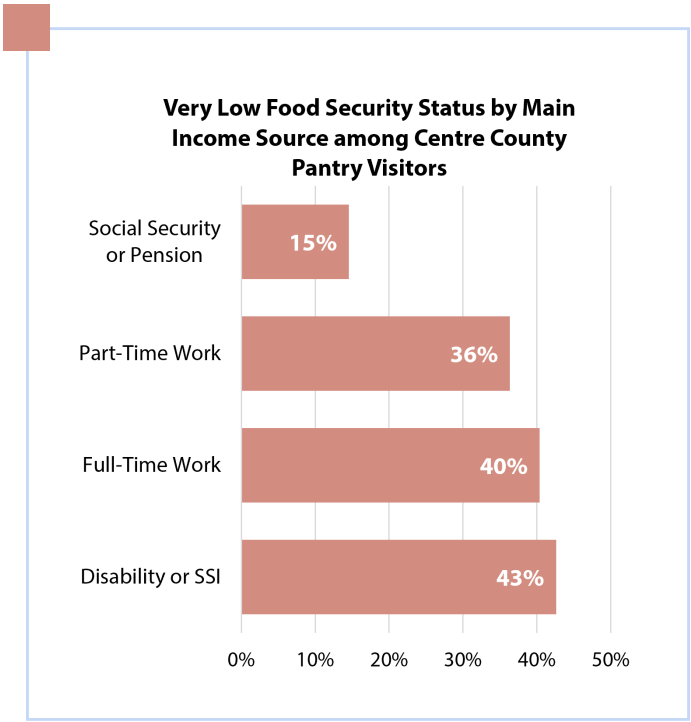
Approach 3: Addressing Upstream and Intersecting Issues that Cause Food Insecurity

Food insecurity does not occur alone; rather, it is the result of a variety of upstream and intersecting issues. Among food pantry visitors in Centre County, these factors include low incomes, chronic health conditions, transportation, and housing. Food pantry visitor households with children were especially likely to earn low wages as well as face transportation and housing challenges.

Poverty is one of the strongest determinants of very low food security, as more than two in five (44%) pantry visitors with incomes below the federal poverty line reported facing very low food security, compared to a third (33%) for households with incomes between one and one a half times the federal poverty line and one in six (17%) households between one and a half and two times the federal poverty line. Households with children were the most likely to live in poverty; two in five (40%) fell below the federal poverty line, while the same was true of one in five senior-only households (21%) and one in three overall pantry visitors (29%). Accordingly, households with children are among the most vulnerable to very low food security, even among those who work full time.

Households with children were the most likely to mention full-time work as their primary income source.
Full-time workers and households who receive disability benefits are the most likely to experience very low food security, with rates of 40% and 43% respectively. This is due in large part to low wages, irregular work, and inadequate disability benefit amounts. Two in five households who reported working full time earned less than $2,000 a month, or $11.50 per hour.

These high rates of very low food security among the full-time employed illustrate the precarity of work for many low-income households. Policy proposals that could increase the security of work include an increase in the minimum wage, which remains at $7.25 per hour in Pennsylvania, and "fair work week" legislation that requires companies to give employees their schedules at least two weeks in advance.



Low wages, precarious work, and fixed incomes are the primary drivers of visits to the charitable food system, not unemployment.
Nearly nine in ten pantry visitors (87%) reported their income sources were Social Security or pension (39%), full-time work (20%), disability or SSI (20%) or part-time work (8%).

Chronic health concerns are the most common intersecting issue with food insecurity for Centre County pantry visitors.
Three in five (61%) survey respondents reported that they or a member of their household had been diagnosed with at least one diet-related health condition like high blood pressure (45%), diabetes (39%), heart disease (17%), or kidney

disease (10%). This is the highest rate found in any county where Community Hunger Mapping has been completed so far. This finding may relate in part to the large share of Centre County pantry visitors who are seniors, but more than half of non-senior households (53%) reported a chronic health concern, which is still a very high prevalence.

The charitable food system should therefore work to source healthy foods and offer choice distribution models that allow visitors to meet their dietary needs and choose the foods that work for them. There may be opportunities to partner with health systems to implement Food as Medicine programming or other collaborative efforts to implement Food as Medicine programming or other cooperative tools to address food insecurity as a social determinant of health. For example, expanding the provision of produce across the charitable food system, including in Centre County, could help support population health aspects of Food as Medicine programs.

Pantry visitors stated that high transportation and housing costs limit their ability to afford food.

Three in ten (31%) pantry visitors had to choose between groceries and utilities in the prior year; a quarter (25%) chose between food and their rent or mortgage. Another quarter (25%) chose between transportation costs and food. Households with children were the most likely to be forced to make these tradeoffs.

The high cost of living and ongoing price inflation have made it much harder for many households across Centre County to make ends meet. The charitable food system cannot solve these underlying intersecting challenges alone, but it can promote or provide referrals to utility assistance programs and provide flexibilities for pantry users with transportation difficulties, such as proxy pick-ups or even home delivery where capacity allows.

Partnerships and the Charitable Food System's Unique Role in Fighting Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is one of the most pressing and thorny challenges today's society faces. Effective work to address hunger will require collective action from a wide variety of people. Every individual, organization, and sector has a unique contribution to make toward alleviating food insecurity in Centre County. The charitable food network's role should be to leverage its position as a trusted low-barrier social service provider and increase access by adjusting policies like hours and intake practices. Centre County's food pantries already substantively reduce hunger, but they can create even more impact via such changes.

Contributions that can be made from other Centre County stakeholders, like government, business, education, and private individuals as well as nonprofit organizations outside the charitable food system, include investing in charitable food providers, connecting people to programs for which they are eligible, and working together to address upstream and intersecting issues through research, advocacy, and policy change. Only by working together can Centre County meet the needs of neighbors today and while striving to end hunger tomorrow.

Methods

Emphasizing voices and experiences of neighbors

This final report is the outcome of an intensive, mixed-methods research endeavor, focused on rigorous quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. The report emphasizes the voices and experiences of neighbors who visit food pantries in Centre County, as well as the input of community leaders and food pantry providers. Data and quotes included in this report are de-identified to the greatest extent possible to maintain the privacy of participants. Each method of data collection is described in turn below.

Data

from multiple state and national organizations

Secondary Analysis

This report's secondary analysis draws upon data from a variety of different sources, including the American Community Survey 2018-2022 and 2019-2023 5-Year Estimates, USDA retailer and food desert data, SNAP participation data from the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, WIC participation data from the Pennsylvania Department of Health, child congregate meal program site and participation data from the Pennsylvania Department of Education and USDA, and Feeding America Map the Meal Gap 2025 and 2026 data with 2023 and 2024 food insecurity estimates. Data from the Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS) conducted by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs, and Pennsylvania Department of Education is used as well. A detailed explanation of the SNAP priority outreach methodology, ArcGIS network analyses for drive and walk times, and methodology used to identify target schools for child nutrition outreach is provided in a technical appendix, available upon request. Section 1 of this report discusses food insecurity rates and numbers for Centre County as a whole using 2024 food insecurity estimates published by Feeding America in Summer 2026. However, throughout the rest of the report, food insecurity rates and numbers by census tract use 2023 estimates, as the 2024 publication date was too near to the final publication date for CPFB researchers to have sufficient time to update analyses for geographies smaller than the county.

13

pantry sites were visited and observed

Visits and Non-Participant Observations at Food Pantries

To include as many agency partners as possible in the Community Hunger Mapping process, CPFB researchers visited nine pantries through neighbor surveys and four that were not survey sites to observe pantry operation during food distribution/pantry hours. These observations helped CPFB researchers bring a broader understanding of pantry practices and the neighbor experience of accessing charitable food to this report.

11 agencies representatives participated in listening sessions

Partner Listening Sessions

CPFB agency partners from Centre County were invited to attend a listening session to discuss strengths and challenges at the pantry level. The discussion allowed for partners to identify and learn from each other's experiences and perspectives as pantry leaders within the community. Discussion topics included pantry and community strengths, sourcing and logistics, and challenges related to distribution. The CPFB research team held one virtual listening session. A total of 11 individuals participated in the listening sessions, representing 7 different agencies.

266

surveys were completed across 9 different locations

12

pantries completed online and phone interviews

Neighbor Surveys

In Fall 2025, CPFB researchers conducted surveys at nine geographically and demographically representative food pantries across Centre County. A total of 266 surveys were completed across the nine different pantry locations. Food pantry visitors were provided various options for survey completion: take the survey at the pantry on a CPFB-provided device, have the survey read to them by a CPFB researcher, or scan a QR code on a postcard that enabled them to complete the survey on their own device at their convenience. Surveys were available in both English and Spanish and designed to take 10 minutes on average. $10 gift cards for a variety of local grocery stores were provided to each participant.

Partner Surveys

The CPFB Policy Research team distributed pantry surveys to agency partners who operate pantries that do not limit participation by age or military status across Centre County. The surveys asked questions regarding distribution type and frequency, operating hours, policies for food pantry visitors, other services offered, and pantry capacity. A total of 12 pantries completed surveys via mail, email, and online. CPFB researchers worked to include relevant information on access components like hours of operation for non-respondents using other relevant data sources.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE: PENN STATE UNIVERSITY AND STUDENTS IN CENTRE COUNTY

Centre County is unique among central Pennsylvania's counties in that a large proportion of its total population is affiliated with higher education, either via their student status or as an employee of Penn State University.

As of the 2024 5-Year ACS, the county's population was 158,576 individuals; according to enrollment data for Fall 2024, there were 42,619 undergraduate students enrolled at Penn State University – Main Campus, meaning that undergraduates accounted for more than a quarter (26.9%) of the county's population.

Another 6,281 graduate or professional students were enrolled at University Park in 2024, bringing the total student population to 48,900, or nearly a third (30.8%) of all Centre County residents.

Penn State also employs approximately 16,000 full-time faculty and staff at University Park, equivalent to about a tenth of the county's population, and the university has economic impact extending well beyond direct employment throughout the county through the presence of its academics, research, and athletics.

These factors combine to give Centre County several unusual demographic characteristics compared to its neighbors, including but not limited to a disproportionately large population of childless young adults with low or no incomes, a high educational attainment rate, a relatively high median income among family households, and more racial and ethnic diversity than observed in most other central Pennsylvania counties.

These factors have resulted in secondary data limitations and challenges in understanding localized food insecurity rates in the State College area, as Feeding America does not produce census-level estimates in tracts with large student populations. Throughout this report, such data limitations are discussed and addressed to the furthest possible degree in order to provide context and clarity.

This project assesses the charitable food system as it serves and is accessible to all Centre County residents, regardless of student status.

This means that there were not primary data collection initiatives conducted at campus pantries or other programs aimed primarily at serving the student population, but students accessing the broader charitable food system were not excluded from participation in the project. Specific questions regarding student status or educational attainment were not asked as part of primary data collection.

More research would be needed to more accurately assess if and to what extent students are visiting traditional food pantries in Centre County, especially since the bulk of primary data collection in the State College area was conducted in August 2025, prior to the beginning of the fall semester.

Conclusion and Final Recommendations

This report is the end product of a yearlong project that sought to improve understanding of Centre County's charitable food system and the experiences of the neighbors it serves via a comprehensive mixed-methods evaluation.

In order to ensure that the food insecurity and charitable food landscape was depicted accurately, this report included analysis of publicly and privately available secondary data, incorporated academic research, and gathered a wealth of primary data from pantry staff, volunteers, and vitally, the people who rely on food pantries to make ends meet.

The research team behind this report always strove to center Centre County's food insecure neighbors by not only describing their lives and the often-difficult circumstances they face with care, compassion, and dignity, but also using the information they generously shared with us to create an informative, actionable resource that can act as a roadmap to real change within and beyond the charitable food system.

Though the publication of this report marks the end of this project in many ways, it is in reality the first step in a new, more important one: the real work of making sustainable change for food insecure neighbors in Centre County and, eventually, ending hunger.

This ongoing project will require dedicated, sustained, cooperative work from a variety of stakeholders, ranging from food pantries to government to health systems to academia to the private sector and beyond, to implement the recommendations contained here, analyze their effects, and evaluate outcomes.

Only by building a coalition for change and working together will we be able to create a Centre County in which no one faces hunger.

Acknowledgments

Thanks and Recognition

Every neighbor who shared their thoughts with us provided priceless insight into the reality of their lives and the true experience of food insecurity. Of all the words in this document, the most valuable are theirs.

Endless thanks to all who took time out of their days to speak with us.

Many thanks to the food pantry coordinators and volunteers of Centre County, without whom the charitable food network would not serve anyone.

Similarly, without their flexibility around surveys so we could meet our neighbors, their willingness to let us conduct non-participant observations so we could understand the pantry network holistically, their feedback via the pantry surveys and listening sessions, and most importantly their dedication to the individuals and families they serve, this project would not have been complete.

Special thanks to CPFB staff outside the Impact and Policy Research team who assisted with surveys and non-participant observations, including Tracy Haas-Ungard, Pam Hicks, Jenna Hollinger, Cydne Shull, Emily Camerer, and Maddy Singer. Thank you for sharing your valuable time to help us engage with our neighbors!

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