

Hunger and Food Insecurity of Low-Income Households in Oregon

Prepared for:

Oregon Housing and Community Services Department

1600 State Street
Salem, Oregon 97310

Prepared by:

Community Planning Workshop

Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management
1209 University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon 97403

Project Manager:

Adam Alabarca

Research Team:

Doo Joon Chung
Jennifer Gahagan
Kim Hanson
Damian Pitt

CPW Project Advisors:

Bob Parker
Dan Van Otten

OHCSA Advisor:

Jeanne Arana

September 2000

Executive Summary

The prevalence of food insecurity and hunger in the United States within the context of the nation's economic prosperity and technological advancements is disturbing. At a time of unprecedented levels of wealth creation, millions of Americans still do not have enough to eat.

The issue of food insecurity and hunger is particularly acute in Oregon. The most sophisticated methods of measuring hunger say that the state experiences some of the highest levels in the country. Consistent with the USDA findings, Community Planning Workshop's research finds substantial hunger and food insecurity among low-income households in the state. Twenty-five percent of our survey respondents experience high levels of food insecurity and hunger. Another 63 percent face moderate levels.

For the 25 percent found to suffer high food insecurity:

- They often or always worry about where their next meal is coming from.
- Adults cut the size of or skipped meals over 9 times in the last 12 months.
- Children were forced cut the size of or skipped meals at least once and as often as 13 or more times in the last 12 months.
- They often cannot afford to eat balanced meals.
- The amount of food that households purchased often did not last and they could not afford to buy more.

Background

In October 1999, the USDA released the findings of a nationwide study on hunger and food insecurity. According to the definitions used by USDA, hunger refers to the physical sensation of being hungry, whereas food insecurity relates to the psychological condition of uncertainty about one's access to food. Despite the efforts of the state, Oregon suffered from the nation's highest rate of hunger among households and the sixth highest rate of food insecurity.

The USDA study, *Prevalence of Food Insecurity and Hunger by State, 1996-1998*, found that 12.6 percent of Oregon households were food insecure. The national average was 9.7 percent. Moreover, 5.8 percent of Oregon households were considered hungry, compared to the 3.6 percent national average. In light of a strong state economy and poverty rates below the national average, these findings have raised questions about how accurately the study reflects conditions in Oregon. The discrepancy between high hunger, high food insecurity, and low poverty has caught the attention government leaders, agency personnel, academics, and advocates. In response, the Housing and Community Services Department began discussions with the University of Oregon's Community Planning Workshop (CPW) about conducting research that explores the problem of hunger in Oregon and provides policymakers with information for addressing that problem.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of CPW's research is to provide HCS and the ICCH with supplemental information in order to develop strategies to reduce the levels of hunger and food insecurity in the state of Oregon. This report attempts to describe the characteristics of hungry and food insecure Oregonians, describe the barriers to being more food secure, and identify potential state level and community level approaches to increasing food security.

Methodology

This study focuses on the hunger and food insecurity of low-income households in Oregon. In this study, "low-income" households include those at or below 60 percent of the state median income level. As an example, 60 percent of the state median income for a family of three equals \$22,830. CPW's research methodology included: (1) a literature review; (2) a survey of at-risk households; and (3) focus groups with low-income individuals and agency staff.

- *Literature review*—CPW conducted a review of reports, journal and newspaper articles, and Internet resources to gain an understanding of the issues of hunger and food security, how it is measured, and what policy approaches communities are using to address it.
- *Household survey*—CPW designed the household survey to collect information on the characteristics of at-risk Oregonians and their use of food assistance programs in Oregon. The survey was administered through the Low Income Energy Assistance Program's (LIEAP) intake process. CPW received a total of 1,360 completed surveys.
- *Focus groups*—CPW facilitated ten focus group discussions—five with low-income participants and five with social-service professionals and community leaders—across the state of Oregon. To capture a broad cross section of the Oregon population, the focus groups were conducted in Portland, Salem, Bend, Pendleton, and Coos Bay. In total, 48 low-income and 52 social service participants attended the meetings.

Characteristics of Survey Respondents

- *Household Type*—Eighty percent of the survey population was female, even though LIEAP is a gender-neutral program. Of the 1,044 women who completed the survey, 47 percent were single mothers. Single mothers accounted for 38 percent of our total survey responses.
- *Ethnicity*—About 82 percent of survey respondents were white. While the ethnic composition of the survey respondents is quite similar to the state, the representation of minority groups in the survey is slightly greater than their representation of the state population.
- *Employment Status*—The survey population experienced very high levels of unemployment compared to the general state population. Forty-one percent of the respondents indicated that unemployment was the reason they were seeking energy

assistance. About 24 percent of the respondents indicated that their households received income from full time employment, while 20 percent received income from part-time employment. About 17 percent indicated that their households earned income from seasonal employment, self-employment, or retirement income.

- *Income*—The median monthly income for the entire sample was \$750. Regionally, median incomes ranged from \$665 in the Eastern region to \$792 in the Central region. Meanwhile, the mean monthly income for the sample was \$905, regionally ranging from \$829 in Central Oregon to a high of \$970 in Southern Oregon.

Food Security Analysis

A key objective of this study was to determine the food security levels of survey respondents, which was determined by the responses to the first five questions on the survey. CPW adapted these questions from the 1998 Oregon Food Bank Customer Profile survey and they are similar to the USDA six-question instrument being used in the 2000 Oregon Population Survey.

Three of CPW's survey questions can be considered questions that address less serious conditions associated with food insecurity. Key questions include:

- How often do you worry about where your next meal is coming from?
- In the last 12 months how often were the following statements true? We couldn't afford to eat balanced meals; the food that we bought just didn't last, and we didn't have enough money to get more.

Figure S-1 shows that nearly 85 percent of the respondents worried about where their next meal would come from at some point in the previous 12 months. Nearly 20 percent indicated they worried often or always, suggesting food insecurity for those individuals.

Figure S-1: How often do you worry about where your next meal is coming from?

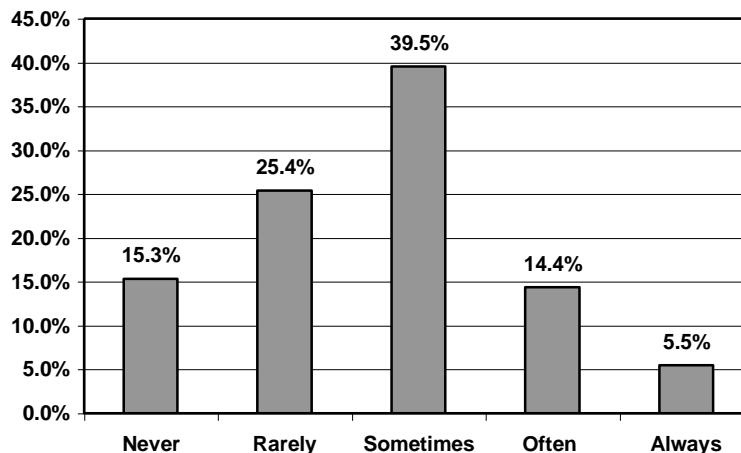
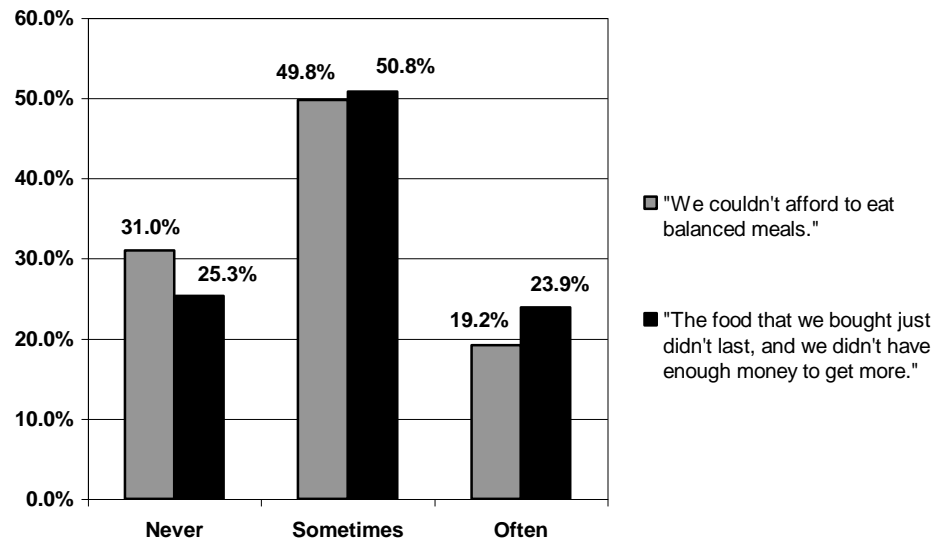


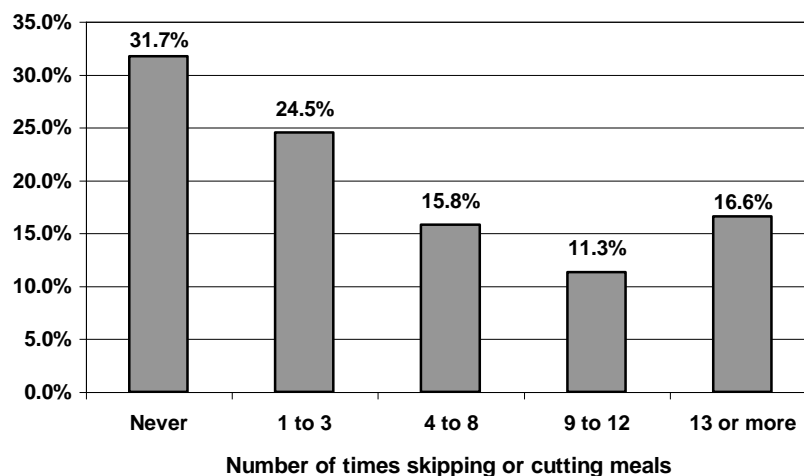
Figure S-2 shows 69 percent of respondents indicated that in the past year, they could not always afford to eat balanced meals. On a more serious level, nearly 75 percent responded that, at some point in the past year, the food they bought did not last and they could not afford to buy any more. Twenty-five percent indicated this situation occurred often, further suggesting substantial food insecurity or the incidence of hunger for these households.

Figure S-2: In the last 12 months, how often were the following statements true?



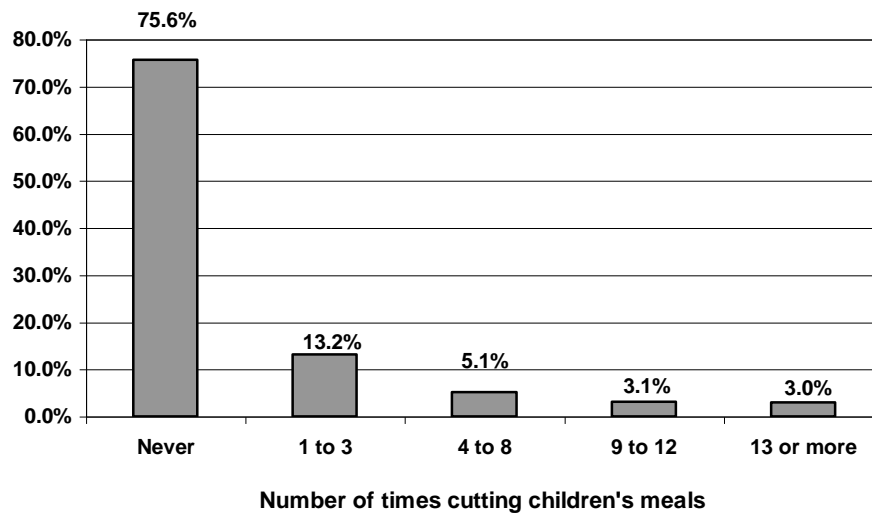
The survey also asked about situations that correspond to moderate stages of food insecurity – adults skipping meals or cutting the size of their own meals because there is not enough money for food. Figure S-3 displays the results. This figure shows that 68 percent of respondents skipped or cut the size of their meals due to a lack of money for food. These people are clearly experiencing some level of food insecurity.

Figure S-3: In the last 12 months, how often did you (or other adult in your household) cut the size of meals or skip meals because there was not enough money for food?



The survey asked about situations involving serious levels of food insecurity and hunger—cutting the size of one’s children’s meals due to a lack of money for food. In the sequence of responses to insufficient levels of food, cutting children’s meals is the most drastic measure. Seventy-seven percent of the survey respondents indicated that they did not experience this situation in the last twelve months, but the fact that 23 percent of our respondents answered affirmatively to this question indicates that these individuals are at high risk of severe levels of food insecurity and hunger (see Figure S-4).

Figure S-4: In the last 12 months, how often did you cut the size of your children’s meals because there was not enough money for food?



Food insecurity and hunger analysis

Because our methodology was slightly different than the one developed by the USDA, CPW developed a slightly different mechanism to classify respondents into one of three categories—*food secure*, *moderate* food insecurity and hunger, and *high* food insecurity and hunger. We based this classification scheme upon the understanding that a household’s hunger coping strategies will become more drastic as its economic situation becomes increasingly unstable. This categorization helped us to determine which survey population subgroups experienced more or less severe levels of food insecurity and hunger. Table S-1 displays the distribution of food insecurity levels for the full survey population. See Chapter Four for the subgroup analysis.

Table S-1: Food insecurity and hunger levels

Level	Percent of Respondents
Food Secure	13%
Moderate	63%
High	25%

Focus Group Analysis

Factor One: Access To Services

Both client and agency participants consistently discussed the issue of access to services in all the focus groups. As Oregon's low-income households juggle tough financial choices, they rely on assistance from local and federal food and income support programs. These programs have a substantial impact when household budgets are tight—Food Stamps or a food box can make the difference between a nourishing meal and an empty plate. Although these services do not offer long-term solutions, they do play a major role in limiting the severity of hunger and food insecurity. Difficulty accessing these services threatens the food security of at-risk households.

Factor Two: Income and Cost Of Living

Another factor to which focus group participants devoted considerable discussion was the combination of low incomes and rising costs of living for Oregon's poor. Client participants spoke of the challenges of juggling food, housing, child-care, transportation, and medical costs, while trying to feed their household. Reflecting the “managed process” idea related to food insecurity and hunger, one low-income Pendleton participant commented, “You have to give up some things, and the food budget gets sacrificed.” For example, little flexibility is afforded to monthly rent, with eviction being a very serious consequence. By contrast, families can manage food intake by eating less or substituting foods with greater nutritional value with food that is less expensive.

Factor Three: Barriers To Employment

If we understand hunger and food insecurity as a function of poverty, then one of the most straightforward solutions is providing employment that gives people the resources to adequately feed themselves and their families. Aside from the systemic economic realities that make livable wage jobs difficult to find, many low-income individuals face other barriers to finding and maintaining employment. Focus group participants noted that a lack of quality, affordable child-care, lack of family-friendly employers, lack of education and skills, and discrimination were the most formidable barriers to employment. Participants also mentioned language barriers, citizenship status, disabilities, mental health issues, drug and alcohol addiction, domestic violence, teen pregnancy, and homelessness.

Factor Four: Transportation

Focus group participants reported that transportation issues, in multiple ways, are a major contributing factor to their risk of food insecurity. It is a core factor that directly impacts all of the other factors described in this report. Without reliable transportation a person cannot get to a job, bring their kids to child-care, go to the grocery store, or access social services. Low-income families without cars that live in small cities or rural communities with limited or no public transportation services are in especially precarious conditions. Even in the urban areas of Portland, Salem, Eugene, and Medford that have more extensive systems, the limits of public transportation put households without an automobile at a distinct disadvantage.

Factor Five: Skills, Knowledge, and Values

Factor Five combines loosely connected themes of contributing factors that CPW felt should be included in this chapter, not merely relegated to an Appendix. So far, many of the factors have pointed to larger, structural issues that are contributing to risk of hunger and food insecurity. This factor touches on aspects that are on a more personal or individual level. For example, focus group participants noted a lack of personal knowledge about nutrition, cooking, and food budgeting skills.

Conclusions

CPW draws the following conclusions from our research:

- The risk of hunger and food insecurity for low-income Oregonians is real and substantial.
- Single mother households face the highest risk of hunger and food insecurity.
- Hunger and food insecurity is prevalent across Oregon's geographic regions.
- A spectrum of factors contributes to a household's risk of hunger and food insecurity.
- Lack of transportation is a key barrier to a household's ability to be employed and to access food and social services.
- The Food Stamp Program is not effectively meeting the needs of the poor.
- Policy should involve comprehensive anti-poverty approaches that focus on hunger factors.

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	I
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
BACKGROUND	1
PURPOSE OF STUDY	2
METHODOLOGY	2
<i>Literature review</i>	2
<i>Household survey</i>	2
<i>Focus groups</i>	3
ORGANIZATION	3
CHAPTER TWO: HISTORY OF HUNGER AND FOOD INSECURITY POLICY, DEFINITIONS, AND MEASUREMENT	5
HUNGER PERCEPTIONS AND POLICY IN THE U.S.: 1930 TO PRESENT	5
<i>The Paradox of Want Amid Plenty</i>	5
<i>Violation of human rights</i>	6
<i>Hunger as an Emergency</i>	6
<i>Contemporary Hunger Definitions</i>	7
HISTORY OF HUNGER MEASUREMENT	9
CONTEMPORARY METHODS	11
<i>Federal Food Security Measurement Project</i>	11
<i>Hunger Measurement in Oregon</i>	12
CONCLUSION	14
CHAPTER THREE: PROFILE OF FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS	15
GOVERNMENTAL PROGRAMS	15
<i>Food Stamps</i>	15
<i>Child Nutrition Programs</i>	17
<i>Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children</i>	21
<i>Nongovernmental Programs</i>	23
CONCLUSION	26
CHAPTER 4: CHARACTERISTICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS	28
DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS	28
<i>Regional Distribution</i>	28
<i>Household Type</i>	29
<i>Age</i>	30
<i>Ethnicity</i>	30
<i>Employment Status</i>	31
<i>Income</i>	31
FOOD SECURITY STATUS	32
<i>Full sample results</i>	32
<i>Subgroup analysis</i>	35
<i>Use of Food Assistance Programs</i>	39
CONCLUSION	41

CHAPTER FIVE: FOCUS GROUP ANALYSIS.....	43
FACTORS	43
SOLUTIONS	43
SUMMARY OF FACTORS.....	44
<i>Factor One: Access To Services</i>	44
<i>Factor Two: Income and Cost Of Living</i>	48
<i>Factor Three: Barriers To Employment</i>	52
<i>Factor Four: Transportation</i>	53
<i>Factor Five: Skills, Knowledge, and Values</i>	55
CONCLUSION.....	56
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS.....	58
FINAL THOUGHTS	60
APPENDIX A: SURVEY METHODS.....	A-1
APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY.....	B-1
APPENDIX C: REFERENCES.....	C-1

Chapter One: Introduction

Background

In the United States, hunger and food insecurity are economic issues that are closely related to the incidence of poverty. In the simplest of terms, these conditions are the result of not having enough money to afford enough food, given the multiple budget pressures a household faces—pressures like rent, utilities, clothing, transportation, and leisure. The reasons why people cannot afford enough food are complex. Beyond affordability, there are issues of access to grocery stores, employment, and social services. Over the last ten years, Oregon has recognized the complexity of food insecurity and has taken steps to deepen policymakers' understanding of the issue.

In 1991, the Oregon Legislature passed the Oregon Hunger Relief Act, which declared that all persons have the right to remain free from hunger and set a goal that “all persons in Oregon have food security by the year 2000.” The Act created the Hunger Relief Task Force (HRTF) and charged them with gauging the depth of hunger in the state and making recommendations to alleviate it and its root causes.

In 1993, Senate Bill 422 created the Interagency Coordinating Council on Hunger (ICCH), which is chaired by the Director of the Oregon Housing and Community Services Department. The Council is made up of representatives from the Departments of Human Services, Agriculture, Education, Economic and Community Development, Corrections, Housing and Community Services, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) as well as the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force. Being comprised of the state's administrative agencies, the ICCH focuses on implementation of HRTF recommendations and making its own recommendations to the Governor's Office.

In October 1999, the USDA released the findings of a nationwide study on hunger and food insecurity. According to the definitions used by USDA, hunger refers to the physical sensation of being hungry, whereas food insecurity includes the psychological condition of uncertainty about one's access to food. Despite the efforts of the state, Oregon suffered from the nation's highest rate of hunger among households and the sixth highest rate of food insecurity.

The USDA study, *Prevalence of Food Insecurity and Hunger by State, 1996-1998*, found that 12.6 percent of Oregon households were food insecure. The national average was 9.7 percent. Moreover, 5.8 percent of Oregon households were considered hungry, compared to the 3.6 percent national average. In light of a strong state economy and poverty rates below the national average, these findings have raised questions about how accurately the study reflects conditions in Oregon. The discrepancy between high hunger, high food insecurity, and low poverty has caught the attention government leaders, agency personnel, academics, and advocates. In response, the Housing and Community Services Department began discussions with the University of Oregon's Community Planning Workshop (CPW)

about conducting research that explores the problem of hunger in Oregon and provides policymakers with information for addressing that problem.

During the initial phases of the project development CPW conducted a series of interviews with representatives of Oregon Food Bank's (OFB) Regional Coordinating Agencies (RCAs), as well as OFB policy advisors to cultivate a better understanding of the issue. Oregon's rank relative to other states, surprised most RCA staff. However, none were surprised about the degree of hunger and food insecurity in Oregon—partially because the food banks are reporting sharp increases in demand for their services. According to the Oregon Food Bank, approximately 464,000 people received emergency food boxes from OFB partners in 1998, an increase of 15 percent from the previous year.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of CPW's research is to provide HCS and the ICCH with supplemental information to better develop strategies to reduce the levels of hunger and food insecurity in the state of Oregon. This report attempts to better describe the characteristics of hungry and food insecure Oregonians, describe the barriers to being more food secure, and identify potential state level and community level approaches to increasing food security.

Methodology

This study focuses on the hunger and food insecurity of low-income households in Oregon. In this study, "low-income" households include those at or below 60 percent of the state median income level. As an example, 60 percent of the state median income for a family of three equals \$22,830. Our research methodology included:

1. Literature review
2. Survey of at-risk households
3. Focus Groups

Literature review

CPW conducted a review of reports, journal and newspaper articles, and Internet resources to gain an understanding of the issues of hunger and food security, how it is measured, and what policy approaches communities are using to address it. Furthermore, the literature review provided a context for developing the focus group process, organizing our findings, and to identifying examples of state-level and community based approaches to increasing access to food.

Household survey

CPW designed the household survey to collect information on the characteristics of at-risk Oregonians and their use of food assistance programs in Oregon. The survey was administered through the Low Income Energy Assistance Program's (LIEAP) intake process. To increase the number of responses, survey administration expanded to include

non-LIEAP energy assistance made available by recent energy deregulation legislation. CPW received a total of 1360 completed surveys.

Focus groups

CPW facilitated ten focus group discussions—five with low-income participants and five with social-service professionals and community leaders—across the state of Oregon. The low-income focus group discussions provided participants the opportunity to describe the barriers they experience in obtaining adequate nutrition for themselves and their families. Discussions with the social-service professionals were designed to uncover potential community level and state level strategies to reduce hunger. To capture a broad cross section of the Oregon population, the focus groups were conducted in Portland, Salem, Bend, Pendleton, and Coos Bay. In total, 48 low-income and 52 social service participants attended the meetings.

Organization

This document is divided into six chapters and three appendices. The following chapters provide background, present and analyze the results of the household survey and focus groups, and draw conclusions from our research.

Chapter Two: History of Hunger and Food Insecurity Policy, Definitions, and Measurement provides a short history of how the definitions and methods for measuring hunger have evolved to create broader understanding of the issue and its underlying causes. This chapter includes the USDA definitions of hunger, food insecurity, and food security. It also describes specific methodologies for measuring hunger including the USDA Food Security module and the Oregon Population Survey.

Chapter Three: Profile of Food Assistance Programs describes governmental and nongovernmental programs that exist in Oregon. This chapter gives readers a sense of the breadth of programs currently in place that provide food to those in need.

Chapter Four: Characteristics of Respondents describes the characteristics of the households that participated in the survey. Demographics, food insecurity risk levels, and use of food programs will be presented in detail.

Chapter Five: Factors and Solutions describes the primary factors affecting hunger and food insecurity as well as potential community level and state level solutions, as identified by our focus group participants.

Chapter Six: Conclusions summarizes CPW's findings, draws conclusions from the research, and reflects upon the experience.

The appendices contain additional supporting materials including the research methodology, original survey instrument and raw survey data, and focus groups transcriptions.

Appendix A: Survey Methodology contains the survey instrument, methodology, and basic statistical analysis of each question. It also includes transcription of the open-ended Question 21 (comments from survey respondents).

Appendix B: Focus Group Summary contains a list of the core questions and summaries of each focus group meeting. This appendix also contains the full list of factors and solutions referred to in Chapter Five.

Appendix C: References contains a bibliography of sources cited in this report.

Chapter Two: History of Hunger and Food Insecurity Policy, Definitions, and Measurement

The way that society perceives and defines hunger has a profound influence upon how communities and government bodies address the problem. Over time, our understanding of hunger in America has become more sophisticated, shifting from a medical issue of malnutrition towards a more comprehensive physical, psychological, social, and economic interpretation. As a result, the response to eliminating hunger has also become more comprehensive. Much of the material for this chapter was inspired by an article written by Janet Poppendieck, Director for the Study of Family Policy at Hunter College of the City University of New York. Ms. Poppendieck writes,

Hunger in America provides a particularly good case study for exploration of the relationship between definition and response because hunger has been subjected to several episodes of discovery in the twentieth century, once in the great depression of the 1930s, once in the civil rights era of the late 1960s, and again in the 1980s.¹

The purpose of Chapter Two is to: (1) provide the reader with a historical perspective of how societal perceptions have influenced policy; (2) provide a historical description of how hunger has been measured; and (3) discuss both contemporary definitions of hunger and contemporary methods of measurement. One caveat—the historical sections are not comprehensive in that they are limited to the twentieth century and do not discuss every perspective or piece of legislation. Nevertheless, this section will provide a sense of how perceptions, policies, and measurement mechanisms have developed over time.

Hunger Perceptions and Policy in the U.S.: 1930 to present

Following Poppendieck's lead, this section discusses the social and historical context of three eras and the hunger-related programs that emerged during those eras.

The Paradox of Want Amid Plenty

The Great Depression brought severe economic suffering to the United States and much of the industrialized world. Massive unemployment placed American households in unstable circumstances. At the same time, there was an incredible amount of food left unharvested, sitting in warehouses, or in other ways destroyed to support falling commodity prices. People were going hungry while food lay to waste. Poppendieck calls this first perception of hunger as “**the paradox of want amid plenty**.”² The federal government responded by creating the Surplus Commodities Program, which distributed surplus food to the hungry. Although the program was marginally successful at reducing hunger, it was popular with both the press and the public because it relieved the uneasiness attributed to wasting food when there was hunger in the nation.³

¹ Poppendieck, p. 25

² Ibid, p. 26

³ Ibid, p. 27

Other programs that developed out of this era were the original Food Stamp Plan in 1939 (which led to the modern-day Food Stamp Program) and the School Lunch Program in 1946. The Food Stamp Plan was another means to distribute surplus commodities without alienating farm businesses. Families on relief would purchase orange-colored stamps at their face value. For every dollar of orange stamps purchased, 50 cents worth of blue-colored stamps were issued. Families were to use the blue stamps to purchase the surplus foods, as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture. At its peak, 4 million people participated in the program.⁴

Violation of human rights

With the prosperity of the post war 1950s, hunger escaped the public's conscience and it was assumed that agricultural surpluses were reaching the hungry. However, hunger as a public issue, again moved to the forefront in the 1960s. This was an era when hunger and poverty were used as political campaign issues. Media coverage of hunger and public activism in support of social equity issues reached new heights.

The existence of domestic hunger, exposed by television documentation and brought to light during John F. Kennedy's presidential campaign, shocked the American public and produced widespread outrage. Borrowing from the civil rights activism of the day, anti-hunger and poverty advocates began to articulate the problem as a "failure of government to meet its obligations to citizens, a denial of rights." Thus, in the 1960s, Poppendieck refers to society's view of hunger as a **violation of human rights** to food.

This era also coincided with President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty initiative. As a result of many reforms, federal spending on food relief programs increased by 500 percent from the late 1960's to the early 1980s.⁵ Government responded with a number of programs and reforms. The Food Stamp Program was reenacted in 1964 and was the object of a number of improvements, including expanding the program nationally, establishing nationwide eligibility standards, and in 1977, the purchase requirement (orange and blue stamps) for food stamps was eliminated.⁶

Other programs included the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), Home Delivered Meals (Meals on Wheels), Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), School Breakfast, Summer Lunch, and the School Lunch program was improved to better meet the needs of the low-income schoolchildren. In addition to these federal program developments, faith based groups, charitable organizations, and business became increasingly active in hunger relief in the U.S.

Hunger as an Emergency

Despite the efforts of the 1960s and 1970s and indications that the incidence of hunger was decreasing, it was clear from the rising demand on an increasing number of food banks and meal kitchens that hunger still existed. The recession in the early 1980s, shifts away from manufacturing towards a low-wage service sector economy, and federal food assistance

⁴ Galer-Unti, p. 21

⁵ Poppendieck, p.28

⁶ Voichick, p. 20

spending cutbacks further amplified the problem. Budget cuts in the 1980s affected Food Stamps, WIC, and child and elderly nutrition programs. By the mid 1980s, poverty rates were approaching levels that were as high as those in the 1960s.⁷

A significant portion of society's response came from emergency food providers like food banks and pantries, shelters, and meal kitchens. According to Second Harvest, the nation's food bank network, 71 percent of the 30,000 partners (in 1993) were established since 1981.⁸ These hunger relief programs were intended to be a temporary response to help people in times of urgent need; in other words, emergencies. Rules and regulations characterizing the procedures of obtaining public assistance did not apply to emergency food providers—if you asked for help you would receive it. Thus, we have a third view of hunger—**hunger as an emergency**.

Defining hunger as an emergency was well received by a public that may have been growing weary of entitlement programs. Because of the nonprofit status of these emergency food providers, the system was structured so that many people could participate charitably—satisfying the public's desire for philanthropy. Business and individual resources were, and continue to be, successfully mobilized. However, the demand for emergency food continues to increase, and low-income persons have become regular users of the emergency food system. “Emergency “ no longer aptly describes the situation when the use of services becomes regular—it is then better described as “supplemental.”

Under pressure from the public, the federal government created the Special Dairy Distribution Program and the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program. These programs, like the Surplus Commodities, took food that otherwise would go to waste and distributed them to the states for use in food assistance programs.⁹ The Farm Bill of 1985, required state agencies to develop a method to distribute food stamps to the homeless, gave categorical eligibility to households receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI), increased deductions for shelter expenses, raised liquid asset limits, and required state to establish job training and employment programs, among others.¹⁰

Contemporary Hunger Definitions

The contemporary definition of hunger has expanded to include the concepts of food insecurity and food security. These concepts not only recognize the physical feeling of hunger (food insufficiency) and its physical effects (malnutrition), but also other factors such as the access to and availability of nutritious food. The notion of food security has “allowed the hunger policy community to cast the definitional net beyond the physiological boundaries.”¹¹ This is not merely a game of semantics. The choice of words used to describe a problem or condition, can narrow or broaden the range of possible solutions. Words are

⁷ Voichick, p. 21

⁸ Poppendieck, p. 29

⁹ Ibid, p. 29

¹⁰ Congressional Quarterly Almanac, p. 525

¹¹ Eisinger, p. 17

important, and the use of the food security/insecurity concept expands the “framework for discussion.” The literature proposes four components of food insecurity:¹²

- **Lack of food quantity**—not enough food to meet nutritional needs.
- **Lack of food quality**—limited variety and nutritional inadequacy of available food.
- **Lack of psychological acceptance of food and food patterns**—personal feelings about deprivation or restricted choice and anxiety about the quantity and quality of household food supplies.
- **Lack of social acceptance of meal patterns**—inability to maintain normal expectations of meal patterns (having only enough food for one meal) and obtaining food (i.e. needing to obtain food through a food bank.)

Oregon law recognizes the broader context of the hunger problem and acknowledges the above categories in its definition of hunger. The Hunger Relief Act of 1991 defines hunger as:

...the state of being unable to obtain a nutritionally adequate diet from nonemergency food channels. Hunger is not one discreet event. Hunger is a series of events that lead up to and follow a lack of adequate food intake. It is a process, in which people become at risk of hunger, attempt to cope with the problem and suffer a variety of health and social consequences.¹³

This definition is similar to the Life Science Research Office definitions cited in the USDA’s Household Food Security In 1995 and Prevalence of Hunger and Food Insecurity: 1996-1998 reports:¹⁴

- *Food security*—Access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food security includes at minimum: (1) the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and (2) an assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways...
- *Food insecurity*—Limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.
- *Hunger*—The uneasy or painful sensation caused by a lack of food. The recurrent and involuntary lack of access to food.

¹² Wagner, p. 8

¹³ ORS 458.530

¹⁴ USDA, p. 2

History of Hunger Measurement

Until 1995, no definitive method for measuring hunger had been developed. As the understanding of hunger evolved, measurement methods also changed. Efforts to measure hunger include four basic strategies: the use of medical and dietary data, the use of poverty indicators as a proxy, analysis of demand for food assistance, and collection of survey data on perceived food sufficiency, anxiety, eating patterns, and coping behaviors.¹⁵

Congress convened the Citizens' Board of Inquiry into Hunger and Malnutrition in 1968 to collect information on hunger and access to food. This was the first attempt to measure hunger on a large scale. The Board performed an extensive literature review and traveled on field trips to counties throughout the United States, holding interviews with health professionals, and conducting hearings with the impoverished. Based on this research and an assessment of poverty and malnutrition data, the Board estimated that 10 million Americans were hungry.

The *Ten State Nutrition Survey, 1968-1970*, was requested by the Partnership for Health Amendment of 1967 and conducted by the Nutrition Program of the Public Health Service. The Ten State study was the most comprehensive to date, surveying 24,000 low-income families; of which half also took part in clinical tests. However, a review by the General Accounting Office concluded that the study failed to provide any reliable data on the prevalence of hunger in the U.S. The study was riddled with delays, budget cuts, and controversy. The GAO reported that, "Hunger as a subjective state or a problem of inadequate food intake is never mentioned in the final five volume report." The clinical tests found little evidence, and the data collected on food consumption "were inadequate to establish reliable information on long-term patterns of eating or deprivation."¹⁶

Some years passed until efforts resumed to measure hunger. Since the 1930s, the USDA had conducted regular national food consumption surveys to aid the food industry in adjusting production to consumer demand, as well as to allow nutritionists to describe the quality of the American diet. In 1977, the USDA included a "food sufficiency" question in its annual survey. This food sufficiency question signified a break from the physical, malnutrition centered conception of the issue. The question was designed to measure the respondent's "perception of the adequacy of the household food supply." Still, this single question was unable to provide reliable results, but served as a foundation for development of future surveys.¹⁷

In 1984, the Physicians Task Force on Hunger in America began a ten-month study to: (1) document to the extent possible the nature and scope of the problem of hunger; (2) assess the health effects of hunger, especially among high-risk groups such as children, pregnant women, and the elderly; and (3) determine why hunger is a problem and make recommendations to remedy the problem, and if possible, prevent it from recurring.¹⁸

¹⁵ Eisinger, p. 21

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 26

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 30

¹⁸ Physicians Task Force, p. 6

The task force's research included interviews with political leaders, administrative agency heads, health care providers, educators, emergency food providers, community organizations, and hungry people.¹⁹ In its report, *Hunger in America, the Growing Epidemic*, the task force estimated that twenty million Americans and eight million children suffered from hunger. At that time, the number of people living below the poverty level was 35 million. They subtracted the number of food stamp recipients (19.8 million), but then added back an estimate of the number of food stamp recipients who received an inadequate amount of benefit to meet their needs (4.95 million). Researchers also added back an estimate of the number of people who were ineligible for food stamps, but were still in need (2.4 million). The study considered families "in need" as those who incomes between 130 percent and 150 percent of poverty.²⁰

In 1989, the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) commenced the Community Childhood Hunger Identification Project (CCHIP), which represented a departure from the use of malnutrition and poverty as estimates for hunger. The CCHIP was also intended to develop a methodology that could be used in future studies. FRAC sought to develop a method to measure hunger that was particular to the industrialized nations characterized by relatively high standards of living, as the United States. Researchers defined hunger as the "mental and physical condition that comes from not eating enough food, due to insufficient economic, family or community resources."²¹

CCHIP surveyed families at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty level and with at least one child under the age of twelve. The survey included eight questions to measure food insufficiency and insecurity caused by economic circumstances over the preceding year and month. Questions asked respondents whether the household had run out of money to buy food, whether they had to rely on a limited amount of food because they were running out of money, if adults and children ever ate less than they thought they should, whether their children ever went to bed hungry, and others. Other questions included the following topics: household composition, socioeconomic, shopping and eating patterns, food emergency coping strategies, and use of publicly funded programs.²² The CCHIP estimated that 5.5 million children under age twelve were hungry; 6 million more were at-risk.²³

Between 1988 and 1994, the National Center for Health Statistics conducted its third National Health and Nutritional Examination Survey (NHANES III). The survey included about 40,000 people from households located in 81 counties around the country and was intended to assess a broad range of national health and nutrition topics. The survey consisted of both an in-home interview and a medical examination conducted in a mobile examination center.

A minor section of the survey included questions to estimate the prevalence of food insufficiency (considered in terms of food quantity). Respondents were asked, "Do you have enough food to eat, sometimes not enough to eat, or often not enough to eat?" Another question was, "Thinking about the past month, how many days did (you/your family) have

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 7

²⁰ Ibid, p. 185

²¹ Wehler et al, p. 30S

²² Ibid, p. 31s

²³ Eisinger, p.33

no food or money to buy food?” Other questions asked if they cut meal sizes or skipped meals for lack of money, and whether they cut children’s meal sizes or skipped meals.²⁴

NHANES III concluded that food insufficiency is a problem in the U.S. and that it is not limited to very low-income populations, specific racial groups, family types or the unemployed. The survey found that 3.9 percent of the entire sample said that there was *sometimes or often not enough* to eat in their households. For low-income households, the frequency increased to 12.9 percent.²⁵

Contemporary methods

Federal Food Security Measurement Project

The National Nutrition Monitoring and Related Research Act of 1990 called for development of a standardized mechanism and instrument for obtaining data on food security. The USDA, the Centers for Disease Control and National Center for Health Statistics of the U.S. Public Health Service led an interagency working group that was formed to create such a tool. In collaboration with leading experts in the field, the working group developed an 18-question survey that would be administered as a supplement to the 1995 Current Population Survey.²⁶ These questions were also used in the Food Security Supplements in 1996, 1997, and 1998.²⁷

The questions were created in order to gauge varying degrees of severity of food insecurity and hunger and ask about five types of household food conditions, events or behaviors:²⁸

1. Anxiety that the household food budget or supply is insufficient to meet basic needs.
2. Perceptions that the food eaten by household members was inadequate in quality or quantity.
3. Reported instances of reduced food intake, or consequences of reduced food intake (such as the physical sensation of hunger or reported weight loss) for adults in the household.
4. Reported instances of reduced food intake or its consequences for children in the household.
5. Coping actions taken by the household to augment their food budget or food supply.

Using sophisticated scaling methodologies, the responses to the questions led to a categorization of the household’s situation. This scale was conceptually based on the research showing that hunger or food insecurity is a “managed process,” meaning that the coping strategies become more drastic as conditions become more severe. Households first note “inadequacy in their food supply” and become worried about the insufficiency. They then make adjustments to their food budget and food served. As their situation worsens,

²⁴ National Center for Health Statistics, Appendix, p. 115

²⁵ Eisinger, p. 34

²⁶ Carlson et al, p. 512S

²⁷ USDA: *Prevalence of Food Insecurity and Hunger by State, 1996-1998*, p. 16

²⁸ USDA: *Household Food Security in 1995*, Executive Summary, p. iv

adults reduce food intake, but “spare the children this experience.” If conditions deteriorate further, children begin to experience reduced food intake as well.²⁹

The four categories developed by the Food Security Measurement Project are:³⁰

- **Food secure**—Households show no or minimal evidence of food insecurity.
- **Food insecure without hunger**—Food insecurity is evident in households’ concerns and in adjustments to household food management, including reduced quality of diets. Little or no reduction in household members’ food intake is reported.
- **Food insecure with moderate hunger**—Food intake for adults in the household has been reduced to an extent that it implies that adults have repeatedly experienced the physical sensation of hunger. Such reductions are not observed at this stage for children.
- **Food insecure with severe hunger**—Households with children have reduced children’s food intake to an extent that it implies that the children have experienced the physical sensation of hunger. Adults in households with and without children have repeatedly experienced more extensive reductions in food intake at this stage.

The USDA’s 1996-1998 hunger and food insecurity study reported that 10 million households were food insecure (fell into one of the three food insecure categories).³¹ Based on the 1996-1998 data provided by USDA, the Oregon Center for Public Policy (OCP) estimated that approximately 400,000 Oregonians are hungry or food insecure.³² The report also found positive relationships between poverty and food insecurity rates, with notable exceptions in Washington State and Oregon.³³ Washington and Oregon had poverty rates slightly below the national average while experiencing some of the highest hunger and food insecurity rates.

When comparing food insecurity with food stamp usage, the results were less conclusive. The hypothesis is that food stamp use and hunger and food insecurity are associated—households that are food insecure are likely to be households eligible for food stamps. Seventeen of the 20 states with food insecurity levels below the national average did have food stamp usage levels below the national average—consistent with the above hypothesis. However, in the 11 states with food insecurity above the national average, only seven had food stamp use rates above the national average. Florida, Arizona, Washington and Oregon had food stamp use rates well below the rates of food insecurity.³⁴

Hunger Measurement in Oregon

The Oregon Population Survey (OPS) is a biennial survey conducted to measure the socioeconomic characteristics of Oregonians and collect their opinions on a variety of policy issues. In 1998 the Oregon Progress Board contracted out survey administration to the

²⁹ USDA: *Household Food Security in 1995*, Executive Summary, p. v

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ USDA: *Prevalence of Food Insecurity and Hunger by State, 1996-1998*, p. 1

³² Telephone interview with Michael Leachman, OCP, July 29, 2000.

³³ USDA: *Prevalence of Food Insecurity and Hunger by State, 1996-1998*, p. 8.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 10

Clearwater Research Institute. Clearwater collected information using a computer-aided telephone interviewing system and completed 4816 interviews with Oregon households in May 1998.

A single question added to the 1998 survey estimated that 119,000 Oregonians live in households that do not have enough to eat and 592,000 more do not eat the kinds of food they want.³⁵ The question was:

Which of these statements best describes the food situation in your household during the last 12 months, that is, since May of last year?³⁶

1. We always have enough to eat and the kinds of food we want.
2. We have enough to eat but not the kinds of food we want.
3. Sometimes, we do not have enough to eat.
4. Often, we do not have enough to eat.

There were concerns that the single OPS question was not the most accurate measure of hunger or food insecurity. The Economic Research Service of the USDA believed that the responses to the OPS question “roughly corresponds” to the Food Security Measurement Project’s categories, but may overstate the incidence of food insecurity and understate the incidence of hunger.³⁷ The OPS estimated that about three percent of Oregonians suffer from hunger and the USDA study reported 5.8 percent, almost twice that of the OPS value.³⁸

In response, the 2000 Oregon Population Survey includes seven food insecurity questions. The 1998 question is used as a screen and a six-question module (recently developed by the USDA to mimic the 18-question module) asks more detailed food insecurity questions.³⁹ The six questions are:⁴⁰

1. Please tell me whether the statement was **OFTEN**, **SOMETIMES**, or **NEVER** true for (you/you or the other members of your household) in the last 12 months. "The food that (I/we) bought just didn't last, and (I/we) didn't have money to get more." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months?
2. "(I/we) couldn't afford to eat balanced meals." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months?
3. In the last 12 months, since (date 12 months ago) did (you/you or other adults in your household) ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?
4. **[Ask only if # 3 = YES]** How often did this happen---almost every month, some months but not every month, or in only 1 or 2 months?

³⁵ Leachman, p. 9

³⁶ Ibid, p. 5

³⁷ Ibid, p. 6

³⁸ Ibid, p. 9

³⁹ Email correspondence with Michael Leachman, Oregon Center for Public Policy, 6/23/2000.

⁴⁰ <http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/foodsecurity/support.htm>

5. In the last 12 months, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money to buy food?
6. In the last 12 months, were you ever hungry but didn't eat because you couldn't afford enough food?

The Oregon Food Bank (OFB) conducts a biennial Hunger Factors Assessment, which does not attempt to measure the level of hunger in the state, but does seek to collect information from emergency food box recipients. The 1998 survey consisted of 42 questions of demographic, social and economic nature (age, household size & composition, race, income, employment, education, child care, housing, federal benefits, food security, emergency food assistance). The 1998 Hunger Factors Assessment reported:

- 36% of respondents often or always worry about where their next meal is coming from.
- 71% of adults cut or skip meals because there is not enough money for food.
- 15% of households with children cut the size of children's meals or skip meals because there is not enough money for food.
- 36% report that transportation distance is a barrier for them to shop at a large grocery store
- 33% cited relatives and 25% cited friends as sources of food.

Conclusion

This chapter scanned the history of policy, definitions, and measurement of hunger and food insecurity in America. The understanding of hunger has progressed and become more sophisticated, and this is reflected in the policies and methods of measuring the incidence of hunger. Although a more comprehensive understanding of hunger has developed in the academic, policy, and advocacy arenas, the mainstream public is not generally aware of the prevalence and complexity of hunger's impact on America's poor. One of the next challenges will be to communicate this message and raise awareness. Implementing a more accurate and standardized means to measure the extent of the problem will certainly help.

CPW's study of low-income households in Oregon is not an attempt to measure the prevalence of hunger and food insecurity in the state. The survey targeted low-income households at-risk of food insecurity, not the general population. Hence, the results are not directly comparable to the USDA or OPS results. The survey did ask food insecurity questions very similar to those used by USDA, which will allow us to make strong statements about the survey respondent's risk of food insecurity or hunger. CPW also collected information on use of food programs, factors that threaten a household's food security, income, cost of living, and demographics. The results allow us to characterize the nature and prevalence of food insecurity among low-income households in Oregon.

Chapter Three: Profile of Food Assistance Programs

Chapter Two described the evolution of society’s perceptions of hunger and the attendant responses from government and charitable organizations. Today, the response to hunger remains a tandem effort between government and nongovernmental efforts. The primary governmental food assistance programs are federally administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (USDA-FNS), while various state agencies administer these food programs locally. Charitable and social service nonprofit organizations continue to provide “emergency food” through food banks, soup kitchens, and supplemental programs.

The purpose of Chapter Three is to provide a general overview of the food assistance system available in Oregon. This section provides short descriptions of both governmental and non-governmental programs addressing hunger and food insecurity. Each description is followed by information about program participation to provide the reader with a better understanding of how the program is administered and accessed by the public.

Governmental Programs

The following governmental programs are administered through the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and relevant state agencies. These programs provide subsidies to eligible individuals and families to purchase or access food they otherwise could not afford and are intended to represent the first line of defense in preventing hunger.

Food Stamps

The Food Stamp Program is intended to improve the health and well being of low-income households by providing them a means to meet their nutritional needs. To qualify for food stamps, participants must meet both financial and non-financial requirements in categories such as income, assets, citizenship status, and work or work-related activities. Table 3-1 outlines both the gross and net income guidelines by household size. More detailed information on food stamps eligibility rules can be accessed through AFS or at the FNS website footnoted below.⁴¹

Table 3-1: Federal monthly income guidelines for Food Stamps, effective through September 2000⁴²

Monthly Income Guidelines for Food Stamps		
Household Size	Gross Income Limits (\$)	Net Income Limits (\$)
1	893	687
2	1,199	922
3	1,504	1,157
4	1,810	1,392
5	2,115	1,627
6	2,421	1,862

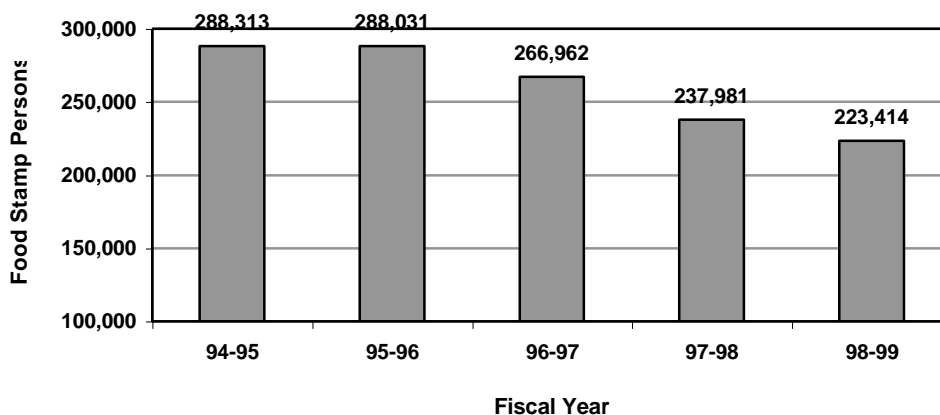
⁴¹ <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/menu/APPS/ELIGIBILITY/ELIG.HTM>

⁴² <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/charts/incomechart.htm>

Between 1994 and 1998, the number of Oregonians receiving food stamps dropped 23 percent. This matches the nationwide average drop in food stamp participation reported by the General Accounting Office in July 1999, with the state of Wisconsin experiencing the greatest reduction at 32 percent, and Hawaii the lowest at 6 percent.⁴³

According to the U.S. General Accounting Office, declines in food stamp participation are partly due to higher levels of employment resulting from strong economic growth and partly due to more restrictive food stamp eligibility policies.⁴⁴ These policies were enacted through the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, also known as the Welfare Reform Act. In Oregon, the monthly average number of food stamp recipients declined every year from 1994 to 1998, with nearly the entire decline occurring after FY 1995-96. In fact, between FY 1995-96 and FY 1998-99, the monthly average of food stamp recipients decreased by 64,617 people.

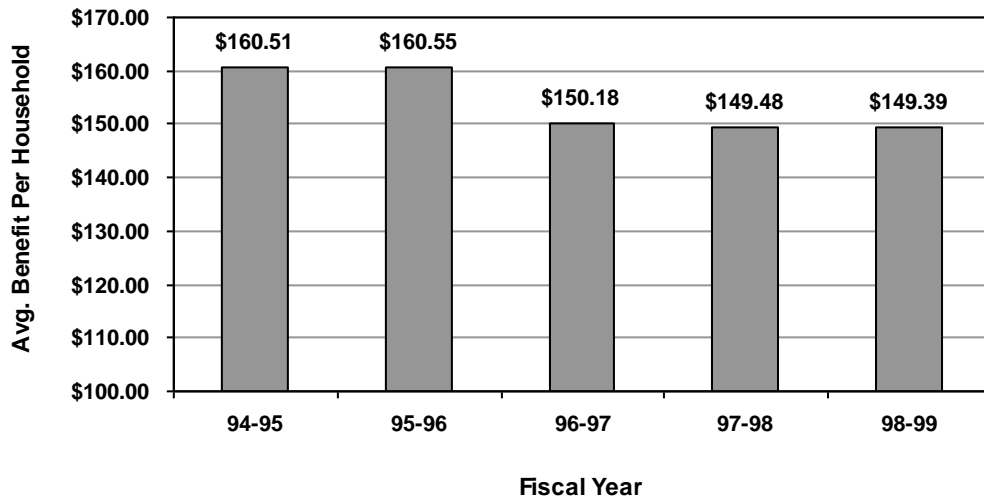
Figure 3-1: Average monthly Food Stamp Persons in Oregon: 1994-1998⁴⁵



Accompanying the decrease in the number of food stamp recipients is the decrease in the average monthly benefits per household in FY 1994-95 through FY1997-98. Despite a small increase in amount of benefit issued to each household (4 cents) in FY 1994-95, the average monthly food stamp benefit has been decreasing since FY 1995-96. The largest decrease in average benefit occurred between FY 1995-96 and FY 1996-97, declining by \$10.37. The USDA Economic Research Service attributes some of this reduction to welfare reform provisions. Welfare reform cut more funds from the Food Stamp program than any other. Previously, benefit levels were determined by 103 percent of the USDA Thrifty Food Plan—a measure of a household’s food budget. After welfare reform this was reduced to 100 percent. In addition, the standard deduction and shelter deductions were reduced or capped at certain levels, and earnings of children 17 years (previously 22 years) and older were counted towards household income.⁴⁶

⁴³ United States GAO, p. 6
⁴⁴ General Accounting Office, p.2
⁴⁵ Ibid.
⁴⁶ Economic Research Service, p. 5

Figure 3-2: Average food stamp benefit per household in Oregon: 1994-1998⁴⁷



Child Nutrition Programs

Recognizing the importance of nutrition for childhood health and physical and cognitive development, FNS developed a number of programs to ensure that school food programs meet the nutritional needs of all students. Program sponsors (schools) receive subsidies from FNS in the form of cash reimbursements for meals they serve. In addition to the cash reimbursements, FNS also distributes commodities such as fresh vegetables, canned foods, meat, and grain products. In Oregon, the Department of Education (ODE) administers the School Lunch, Breakfast, Special Milk, and Summer Food Service Programs. The Department of Human Services Health Division administers the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Nutritional Program.

School Lunch and Breakfast

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Programs (SBP) are open to any children attending participating schools. Children from families earning income equal to or below 130 percent of the poverty level are eligible for *free meals*. Children of families earning income between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for *reduced price meals*. Children from families earning above 185 percent are ineligible for free or reduced meal prices.

Schools choose what meals to serve, however, all meals must meet the nutritional requirements set by USDA. USDA, for example, sets the minimum amount of the essential nutrients (protein, Vitamin A and C, iron and calcium) and calories each meal must contain. In addition to establishing the nutritional requirements, USDA provides training and technical support to schools in the program to ensure the quality of the meals served in schools. In Oregon, ODE developed the *Food Pyramid Choice Menu* to reduce waste and increase student satisfaction. Elementary school children have the option to choose from three entrees. Children are also offered a variety bar, which includes fruits, vegetables, grains, and milk.

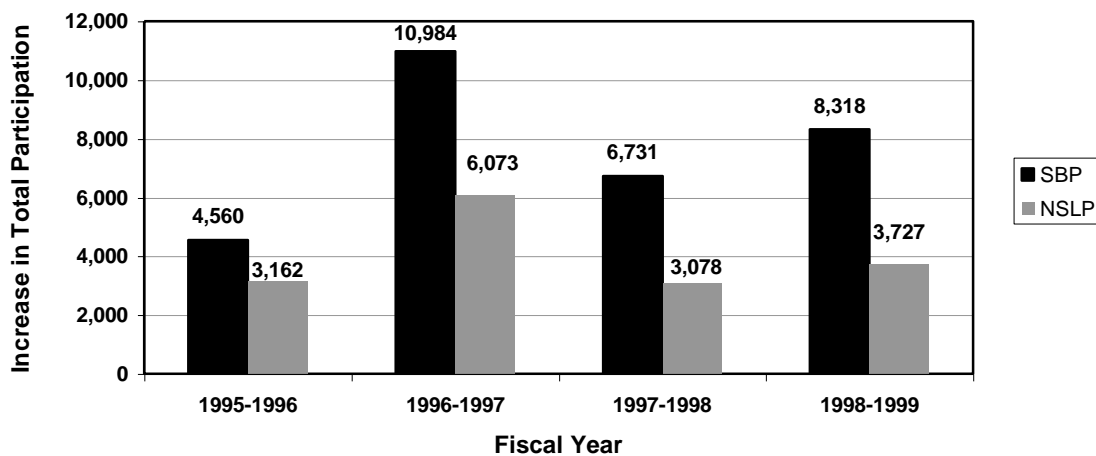
⁴⁷ AFS, Public Assistance Charts, Statewide Data. December 1999. p. 39

Participation in both NSLP and SBP has increased each year between 1995 and 1999. Total participation is measured in *number of meals served* and is based from the average daily meals served. Between FY 1995-96 and FY 1998-99, the number of School Lunch meals served increased from 250,157 to over 266,000, an increase of 6.3 percent⁴⁸, while enrollment over the time period has increased by 2.8 percent.⁴⁹

By comparison, total participation in School Breakfast increased from 59,745 in FY 1995-96 to just over 90,000 for the current school year (90,338 as of January 28, 2000). This equals an average annual increase of 7,648 meals served each day, or a 10 percent average growth over the five years. Figure 3-3 compares the yearly increases in the average daily number of School Lunch and Breakfast meals served since 1995.

Comparing the lunch and breakfast programs indicates that both programs experienced the largest gains (over this time period) during FY 1996-97. While this coincides with the passage of the welfare reform act, any connections are speculative. It should also be noted that the gains in breakfast participation are about twice that of the lunch program. This is likely a reflection of the relative sizes of the School Lunch and Breakfast programs—School Lunch is already extensively used.

Figure 3-3: Increase in the daily average participation in NSLP/SBP, FY 95-96 to FY 98-99



Special Milk

The Special Milk Program provides free and reduced priced milk for schools and childcare institutions not participating in the School Lunch or Breakfast programs. Schools might not participate in the lunch or breakfast programs due to lack of resources (cafeteria, kitchen), anticipated costs of the program, or the district may think there are not enough eligible children to be worthwhile.⁵⁰ The federal government reimburses the schools and childcare institutions for each half pint of milk served through the state agency that

⁴⁸ <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/slfypart.htm> and <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/sbfypart.htm>

⁴⁹ Enrollment as of October 1, <http://www.ode.state.or.us/stats/profile.pdf>.

⁵⁰ Email correspondence with Heidi Dupuis, ODE, 4/28/2000.

administers the program at the local level. The income guidelines that apply to NSLP and SBP also apply to the Special Milk Program.

In Oregon, the number of half-pints served as part of the Special Milk Program has decreased over 33 percent since the 1995-96 school year.⁵¹ This reduction can be viewed in light of the increases in participation in the Lunch and Breakfast programs—increases that would preclude schools from participating in the milk program.

Summer Food Service⁵²

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides free meals to children (ages 18 and under) during the summer months when other federal meal programs are not available. People with mental or physical disabilities over 18 years may also receive free meals from the program. The meal sites must be state approved, and include sponsors such as school districts, government agencies, camps, and non-profit organizations. FNS reimburses the sponsors for each meal served.

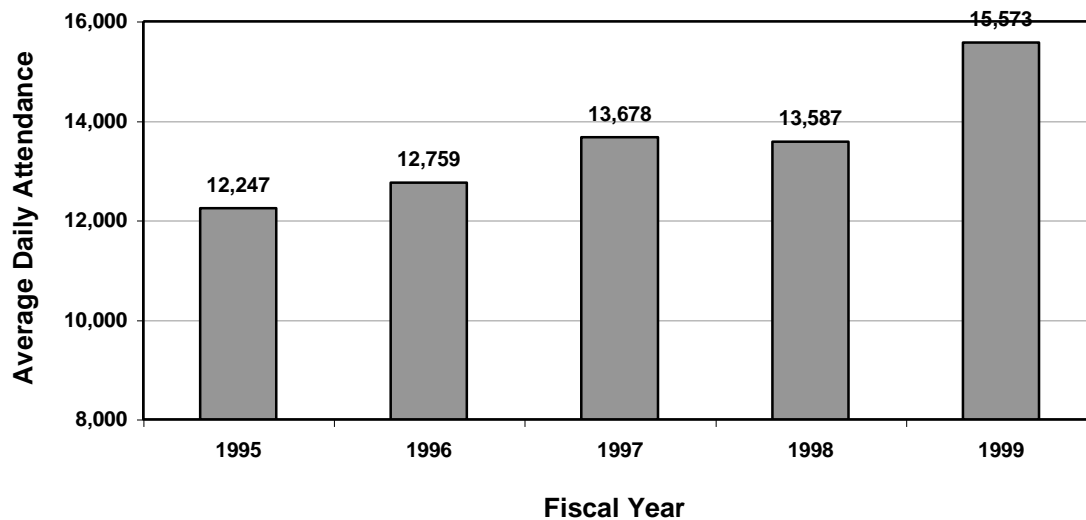
The sponsors fall into one of three categories: open, enrolled, or campsite. *Open sites* serve free meals to children in low-income areas where at least 50 percent of the children are from families earning incomes at or below 185 percent of the poverty level. *Enrolled sites* provide free meals to children enrolled in activity programs. In order to qualify, at least half the children receiving meals at the enrolled sites must be from low-income families. *Camps* may participate in the program, but only the meals served to children from families eligible for free and reduced-price meals are reimbursed.

Figure 3-4 shows participation in the Summer Food Program has increased 27 percent since 1995. Average Daily Attendance is calculated during the month of July, the peak month for Summer Food participation. The increases may be a result of increases in summer food sites or increasing demand for meals. While the summer food program is increasing, it should be said that the daily participation in the school lunch program is about 266,000 in Oregon, leaving a large gap between those served during the school year and during the summer months.

⁵¹ <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/smhpfy.htm>

⁵² <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Summer/aboutsfsp/faqs.htm>

Figure 3-4. Average daily attendance of Summer Food Program, Oregon, 1995-1999⁵³



Child and Adult Care Food Program⁵⁴

CACFP provides meals to children and adults receiving day care. FNS reimburses participating organizations for meals served. These organizations include childcare centers (generally public or private nonprofit), after-school care programs, family day care homes (licensed day care providers in private residences), homeless shelters, and adult day care centers. Children age 12 and under are eligible for two meals and one snack per day at child care centers. Children age 18 and under are eligible for an after-school snack. Adults must be at least 60 years of age or functionally impaired.

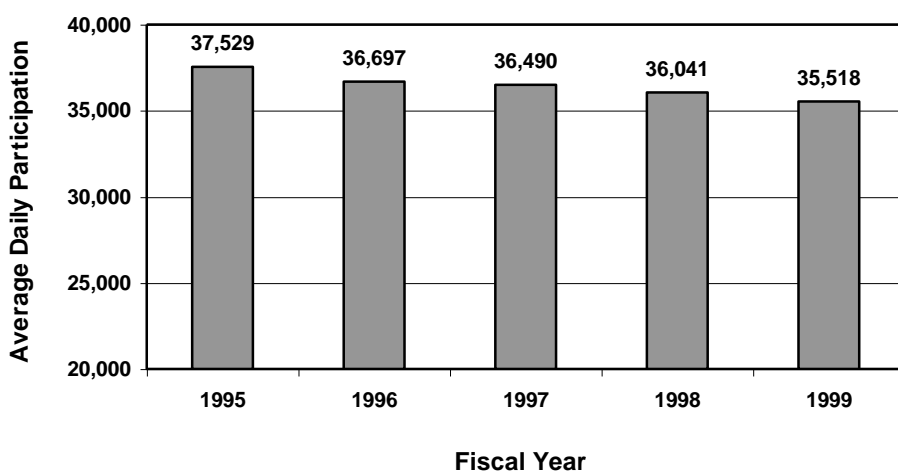
Figure 3-5 shows historical trends in the CACFP. In Oregon, average daily participation in CACFP declined slightly each year since 1995. The reasons for this decrease are unclear. Nevertheless, according to the FNS, over 25 million meals were served in Oregon in FY 1999 and \$23 million dollars in reimbursements received.⁵⁵

⁵³ <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/sffypart.htm>

⁵⁴ <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Care/CACFP/cacfpfaqs.htm>

⁵⁵ <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/ccmeals.htm> and <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/cccash.htm>

Figure 3-5. CACFP Average Daily Attendance in Oregon, 1995-1999



Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children

This program is commonly known as WIC and is designed to meet the special needs of mothers and young children. Administered by the Oregon Health Division, *WIC* provides food vouchers, nutrition counseling, and health services to low income families. Specifically, WIC focuses its efforts on pregnant women, breastfeeding women (up to infant's first birthday), non-breastfeeding postpartum women (up to six months after infant's birth), infants, and children under age 5.

The vouchers help mothers buy food high in nutrients, such as protein, calcium, iron, and vitamins A and C. WIC foods include iron-fortified infant formula and infant cereal, iron-fortified adult cereal, vitamin C-rich fruit and/or vegetable juice, eggs, milk, cheese, peanut butter, dried beans or peas, tuna fish and carrots.⁵⁶ The vouchers are similar in concept to food stamps, but WIC places more conditions upon the food that is eligible for purchase.

There are four types of requirements for WIC eligibility:⁵⁷

- **Income**—income must be below 185 percent of the poverty level.
- **Residential**—applicants must reside in the state in which they apply.
- **Categorical**—applicants must fall into one of the categories mentioned above.
- **Nutritional risk**—applicants must be seen by a medical professional and determined to be at *nutritional risk*, in other words have medical or dietary conditions, which threaten the health of the mother or infant.

WIC is not a federal entitlement program, meaning that all persons who qualify are not necessarily served. Congress determines the funding for the program, and states can also appropriate funds for WIC. In response to demand outstripping supply of funds, USDA has developed a prioritization scheme that addresses the most serious cases first. Of all eligible persons in the United States, USDA estimates that it is able to reach about 81 percent.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/MENU/FAQ/FAQ.HTM>

⁵⁷ <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/CONTENT/howtoapply/eligibilityrequirements.htm>

As of May 2000, the Health Division estimates that the Oregon WIC program reached 74.3 percent of the eligible persons in the state. The program served 88,041 of the 118,580 eligible persons with a goal of 95,479 or 80.5 percent by the end of 2000.⁵⁹

Table 2 displays the changes in WIC participation in Oregon and the United States since 1995. In Oregon, participation increased, although at a decreasing rate over the timeframe. Oregon and the U.S. moved together from 1995 to 1997, showing that Oregon was following national trends. However, in FY 1997, Oregon's WIC participation continued to increase while numbers nationwide fell.

Table 2. Comparison of Percent Changes in WIC Participants: Oregon, U.S.⁶⁰

Percent Change in WIC Participants, 1995-1999		
Year	Oregon	United States
1995-1996	4.7	4.3
1996-1997	3.8	3
1997-1998	2.3	-0.5
1998-1999	1.6	-0.8

WIC Farmer's Market

The WIC Farmer's Market Program also serves as a means to supplement the nutrition and buying power of WIC families. Moreover, the program supports small, local agricultural activities. In Oregon, the program provides \$20 in coupons to nutritionally at-risk families to purchase locally grown fresh produce at farmer's markets around the state. The Farmer's Market Program serves 16,150 households in 16 counties where farmer's markets are active.⁶¹ This is approximately 17 percent of the projected total WIC participants for 2000. Due to program funding limits, families are only eligible once each growing season.

Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) provides supplemental commodities to low-income persons that are especially vulnerable to malnutrition, particularly pregnant women, women within twelve months of their pregnancy, children age five or younger, and the elderly. The program is designed to provide qualified recipients with specified nutritional foods necessary for a diet that assures good health. This program is an alternative to WIC and is available only in Multnomah County. OHCSO contracts with The Salvation Army to distribute CSFP commodities through their Child's Path program. Nutrition education and outreach are also provided to participants. This program serves up to 11,300 individuals each year—approximately 40 percent of program participants are women and children, 60 percent are elderly.

⁵⁸ <http://WWW.FNS.USDA.GOV/wic/MENU/FAQ/FAQ.HTM#4>

⁵⁹ Telephone interview with Sarah Liggett, WIC Program, 6/26/2000.

⁶⁰ <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/wifypart.htm>

⁶¹ Telephone interview with Maria Menor, WIC Program, 6/29/2000.

Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations⁶²

FDPIR provides commodities to low-income households on Indian reservations. Many Native Americans participate in FDPIR as an alternative to Food Stamps because of lack of access to grocery stores. FNS administers FDPIR at the federal level, and relevant state agencies or Indian Tribal Organizations administer the program at the local level. USDA ships commodities to the administering agencies, where the food is stored and then distributed to eligible persons. USDA also provides funding for administrative costs.

Participants receive a monthly food package weighing 50 to 75 pounds, which includes meats, vegetables, dairy products, grains and cereals. USDA also provides participants with information about nutrition and menu planning with commodity foods. They report that 405 households and 1040 people are served this year by FDPIR in Oregon.⁶³

Nutrition Program for the Elderly (NPE)

NPE provides elderly persons with nutritious meals through home delivered meals (Meals on Wheels) or at congregate meal sites. The program is administered by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) in conjunction with the FNS. The Senior and Disabled Services Division (SDSD) administers the program at the state level. Age is the only eligibility criterion, and participants must be age 60 or older. Meals are free, but participants can contribute as much as they are willing to. FNS provides commodities or cash reimbursements for meals served to state agencies, which pass them on to organizations that, serve meals through DHHS programs.

In Oregon, NPE serves approximately 2.69 million meals per year and reaches 40,000 elderly residents. Much of the program funding comes from the Older Americans Act and “door donations” or “contributions” from program participants. According to the SDSD, FNS contributes only \$0.54 of the \$5.00 average cost per meal. SDSD also noted that the need for home delivered meals is rising, as the number of older Americans unable to leave their homes independently is increasing.⁶⁴

Nongovernmental Programs

Due to limited funding, federal and state government programs are unable to provide levels of assistance that would eliminate hunger and food insecurity. Recognizing that the poor need assistance over and above what the government can provide, nongovernmental organizations, like churches, advocacy groups, and other anti-poverty organizations have mobilized and focused private resources towards hunger relief. These groups play a crucial role in reaching individuals and families who are ineligible for, unaware of, or disinclined to seek public assistance. In Oregon, the nongovernmental response to hunger and food insecurity rests heavily with the Oregon Food Bank, the primary agency for coordinating emergency food distribution in the state.

There are hundreds of organizations that partner with the Oregon Food Bank Network, and each distributes food and helps the hungry in similar and different ways. Outside of the

⁶² <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/MENU/SCHOOLS/INDIAN/fdpifaq.htm>

⁶³ Telephone interview with Joanne Lewin, USDA, 7/10/2000.

⁶⁴ Telephone interview with Patricia List, SDSD, 7/7/2000.

OFB Network, there are several other organizations that provide hunger relief such as Food Not Bombs, an international organization with groups in Portland, Salem, and Eugene, and Friends in Service to Humanity (FISH), as well as other faith-based groups.

This section is limited to providing information about the Oregon Food Bank and how it functions in the state.

Oregon Food Bank

The Oregon Food Bank (OFB) is a private non-profit organization that supplies readily accessible food to hungry people. OFB formed in 1988 through a merger of two hunger relief organizations—the Interagency Food Bank and Oregon Food Share. In addition to emergency food distribution, OFB is active in broader anti-poverty efforts that affect household food security. OFB is also a member of America’s Second Harvest, the nation’s largest hunger relief organization.

Food is collected from a variety of sources including food industries, wholesalers and retailers, community food drives, bulk food purchases, Second Harvest, and the USDA. Once collected, OFB distributes the food to 18 regional coordinating agencies (RCA) across the state, who in turn distribute the emergency food to a total of 680 member agencies, such as food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters in their local service areas.

Oregon Food Bank garners food for distribution through a variety of ways:⁶⁵

- **Industry:** Growers, processors, manufacturers of food products as well as wholesalers and retailers donated more than two-thirds of the food collected by the Oregon Food Bank. During 1999, more than 22 million pounds of food were donated by the private food industries.
- **USDA surplus commodities:** OFB receives food supplies from the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), which provides commodity food to low-income individuals. USDA supplies commodity food to the state through TEFAP, and the state then distributes the food to local hunger-relief groups such as OFB. During 1998-1999 USDA distributed 4,873,510 pounds of food to the Oregon Food Bank through TEFAP.
- **Community food drives:** Oregon communities make donations to OFB by organizing food drives. OFB helps groups organize and run food drives by providing posters, food barrels, and consultation on operating successful food drives. In 1999, 4,557,798 pounds of food were collected through food drives.
- **Food purchases:** OFB also purchases food with grants and private cash donations. In FY 1998-1999 Oregon Food Bank purchased over 1,920,000 pounds of food. This was an increase of 7.4 percent from the previous year.

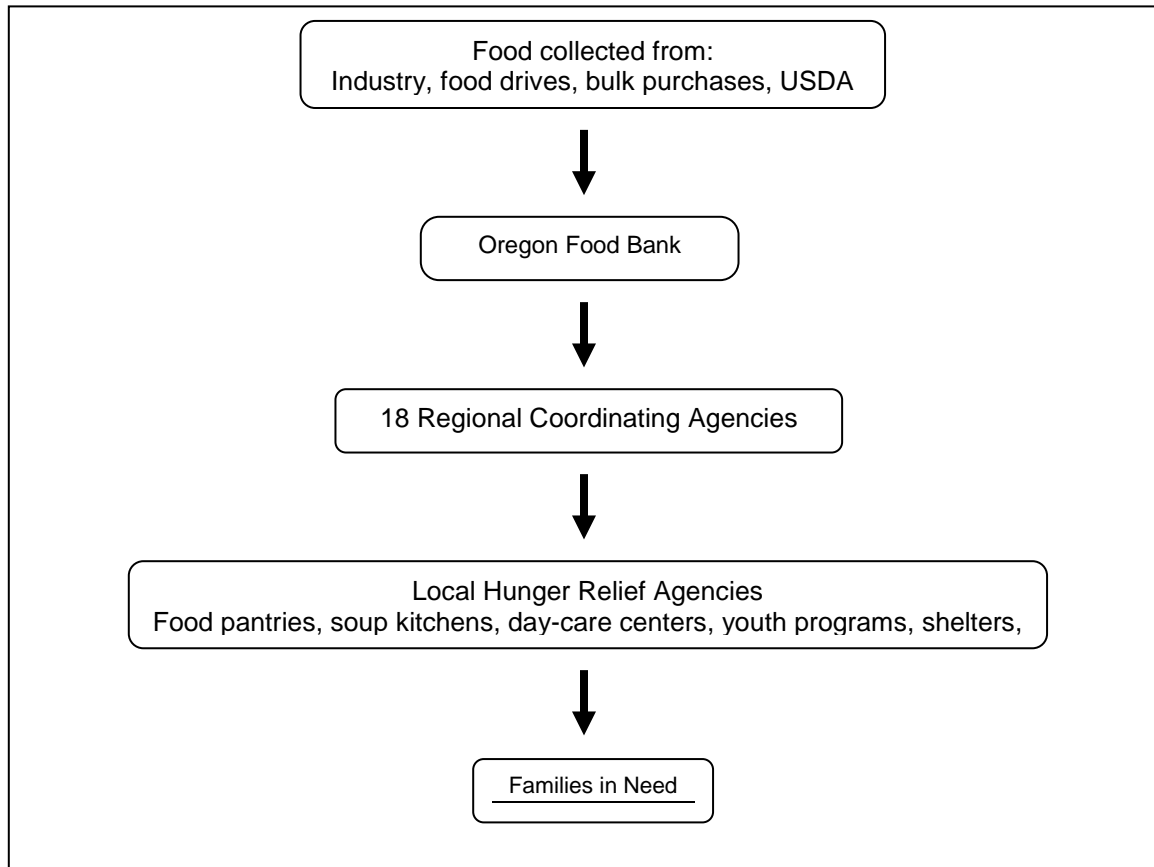
As mentioned earlier, the Oregon Food Bank distributes food in Oregon through a network of partner agencies. Eighteen regional coordinating agencies (RCAs) around the state serve as the main infrastructure for food distribution. These RCAs generally have warehouses,

⁶⁵ Oregon Food Bank, *1999 Hunger Relief Statistics*

refrigerators, and trucks to then pass the food along to local charitable organizations. In addition to providing food to these organizations, OFB provides technical assistance for fundraising, food drives, and other activities.

These independent organizations are the means through which food passes from OFB to the individual. Examples include food pantries, soup kitchens, and residential and homeless shelters. Oregon Food Bank also provides food to organizations such as Head Start program and teen and senior centers. OFB supplement these organizations' food budgets and allows them to focus on providing other services.⁶⁶ Figure 3-6 depicts how the pieces of the OFB Network fit together.

Figure 3-6. Schematic of Oregon Food Bank Network



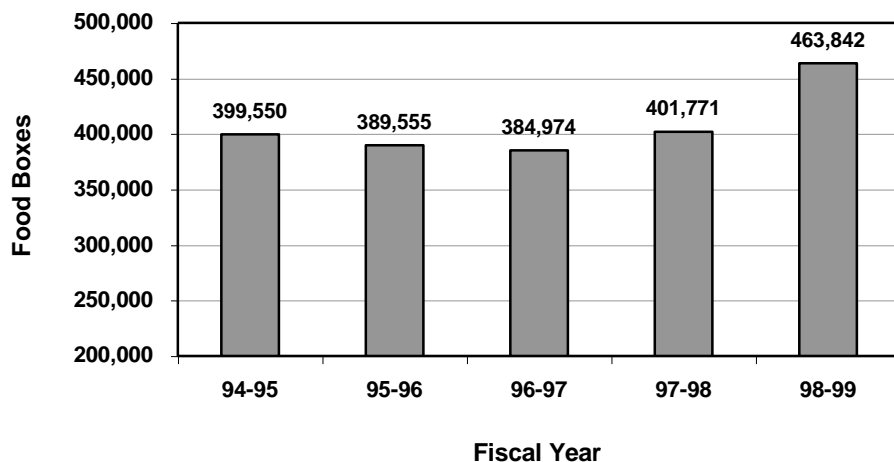
Service Demand

Demands for emergency food boxes have increased at accelerating rates since FY 1996. Between FY 1996-97 and FY 1997-98, the number of people receiving emergency food boxes increased by 4.36% from 384,974 to 401,771. In 1998-99, the number of people receiving emergency food boxes increased to 463,842, an increase of 15.45% from the previous year. Figure 3-7 is based on OFB record keeping, and shows recent trends in emergency food box demand.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ <http://www.oregonfoodbank.org/gets/index.html>

⁶⁷ 1999 Hunger Relief Statistics published by Oregon Food Bank.

Figure 3-7. Oregonians receiving emergency food boxes between FY 1994-95 and FY 1998-99.⁶⁸



Gleaning Groups

Gleaning or Food Recovery is the collection of “wholesome food for distribution to the poor and hungry.” The basic premise is that food that otherwise could be consumed, should not go to waste. It includes: (1) *field gleaning*, which involves collection of food from fields already mechanically harvested or from fields in which harvesting is not economically feasible; (2) *perishable produce rescue* from grocery stores or markets; (3) *perishable and prepared food rescue* from restaurants, schools, hospitals, cafeterias; and (4) *nonperishable, processed food collection* from manufacturers, distributors, grocery stores, and through food drives.⁶⁹

In Oregon, 38 gleaning groups and over 8,000 low-income people are active in the state.⁷⁰ OFB provides technical assistance, training, resource development, and moral support to gleaning groups throughout the state via a Statewide Gleaning Coordinator. The coordinator also works in partnership with the USDA Farm Service Agency. Two statewide networking meetings are organized each year and an annual training conference. In addition the coordinator has published a manual and regular newsletters to keep groups informed.⁷¹

Conclusion

The government food programs form the public policy response to reducing hunger among at-risk households. In most programs, usage and participation is increasing, suggesting a growing need for services. The most notable exception is the Food Stamp Program. As said earlier, the number of people receiving food stamps has fallen in the last four years, and is

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ A Citizen’s Guide to Food Recovery, USDA, p. 1

⁷⁰ Email correspondence from Sharon Thornberry, Statewide Gleaning Coordinator, 6/21/2000.

⁷¹ Ibid.

commonly explained as a result of both economic growth and the tightening of eligibility requirements through welfare reform. Because of the role food stamps can play in a household's ability to purchase food, the falling number of recipients, in light of the USDA hunger and food insecurity findings, raises concerns for policymakers.

The nongovernmental response to hunger in the state is primarily coordinated by the Oregon Food Bank. They have developed an extensive network of sponsors, donors, partner agencies, and volunteers to mobilize private resources. The demand on OFB's services has increased significantly in the last two years, again indicating a growing need for hunger relief services. This increase is also consistent with the USDA findings. As a counterpoint, another way to view these increases is that OFB has become too effective in distributing food, unwittingly nurturing a dependence upon food bank services. One major factor influencing this is the reality that obtaining a food box is a far simpler process than applying for food stamps. CPW's focus group meetings, discussed in Chapter Five, may shed additional light on the subject.

Chapter 4: Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Chapter Four describes the characteristics of the survey respondents. CPW administered the survey to households participating in the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) with cooperation of Oregon's community action agencies. From January 2000 to May 2000, agency staff asked clients to complete the two-page survey during the appointment process. For LIEAP agencies that administer applications through the mail, clients mailed completed surveys back to the agency. Appendix A contains the survey instrument, the raw survey data, and a more complete discussion of the survey methodology. In total, CPW received 1,360 completed surveys.

The survey produced dramatic results. CPW found that 25 percent of the survey population experienced high levels of food insecurity and hunger. This means that one out of four households surveyed are frequently cutting the size or skipping meals (for both adults and children), do not earn enough money to eat balanced meals, and often worry about where their next meal is coming from. More specifically, 68 percent of the respondents reported that an adult in the household was forced to cut the size or skip a meal at least one time in the last twelve months. Sixteen percent cut or skipped meals 13 or more times during this same time period. In addition, 23 percent of the respondents reported that a child in the household was forced to cut the size or skip a meal at least one time in the last twelve months; three percent experienced this 13 or more times. These figures demonstrate that food insecurity and hunger are real and serious issues for low-income Oregonians.

This chapter is organized into three sections. The first section describes demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the survey respondents and compares it to the state population. The next section analyzes the food security status of these respondents. The final section describes survey respondents' use of food assistance programs.

Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics

CPW did not attempt to survey a random sample of Oregon's general population from which to extrapolate levels of hunger and food insecurity statewide. Rather, our survey targeted a specific low-income population: households that participate in the LIEAP program. Nevertheless, the sample size (1,360 respondents) allows generalization of the results, assuming no systematic response bias exists.

Regional Distribution

CPW used the five geographic service regions established by OHCSO to organize both the survey and focus group results. The following list shows the counties within the five service regions:

- North: Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas, Columbia, Hood River, Tillamook, and Clatsop Counties
- Eastern: Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam, Morrow, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, Wheeler, Grant, Baker, Malheur, and Harney Counties
- Central: Deschutes, Crook, Jefferson, Klamath, and Lake Counties
- Valley: Lane, Linn, Marion, Polk, Lincoln, Yamhill, and Benton Counties
- Southern: Douglas, Coos, Curry, Jackson, and Josephine Counties

Table 4-1 displays the regional distribution of surveys distributed and surveys completed, compared to the state’s estimated 1998 population. CPW based the distribution of surveys on the percentage of total statewide LIEAP households residing in the respective regions. Overall, the survey respondents comprise a higher representation from Eastern Oregon, Central Oregon, and the Willamette Valley than the state’s 1998 population, as estimated by Portland State University’s Center for Population Research and Census. The North region is under-represented with respect to completed surveys.⁷²

Table 4-1: Surveys Distributed, Returned, and State Population by region

Region	Surveys Distributed	Surveys Returned	State Population*
North	33%	25%	45%
Eastern	11%	12%	6%
Central	9%	11%	6%
Valley	29%	38%	29%
Southern	17%	14%	13%

* Source: Portland State University, Center for Population Research and Census, 1998

Household Type

Eighty percent of the survey population was female, even though LIEAP is a gender-neutral program. Of the 1,044 women who completed the survey, 47 percent were single mothers. In addition, single mothers accounted for 38 percent of our total survey responses. Table 4-2 compares the distribution of household type by region.

⁷² The under-representation of the North region was due to miscommunication between OHCS, CPW, and the LIEAP agencies in Multnomah County about each party’s respective roles and expectations with regard to the survey administration.

Table 4-2: Household type by region

Household Composition	Total	North	Eastern	Central	Valley	Southern
Single Parent Female	38%	36%	31%	32%	42%	39%
Single Parent Male	5%	8%	6%	4%	3%	3%
Single No Kids	16%	23%	28%	14%	11%	12%
Two Parent Household	31%	23%	24%	33%	35%	37%
Two Adults, No Children	9%	9%	8%	15%	7%	7%
Other	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%

Table 4-2 also shows that single-female headed households were the most prevalent household type in each region except Central, where slightly more respondents were from two parent households. Two parent households were the second most represented group in every region except Eastern, where it was third after “Single No Kids.”

Age

Respondents’ age ranged from 17 to 91 years. The median age for all respondents was 39.7 years. Table 4-3 displays the respondents’ age distribution by region and compares it to the 1998 Oregon Population Survey (OPS).⁷³ CPW’s survey has greater representation from the 25 to 34 age group and 35 to 44 age group; less representation from the 45 to 54 age group and 65 and over. Overall, the age distribution for the LIEAP hunger survey is younger than that reported by OPS for 1998.

Table 4-3: Age group by region

Age Group	'98 OPS	Total	North	Eastern	Central	Valley	Southern
17 to 24	12%*	12%	19%	12%	15%	12%	14%
25 to 34	18%	27%	26%	24%	28%	29%	25%
35 to 44	21%	32%	28%	27%	28%	36%	38%
45 to 54	22%	14%	13%	14%	13%	14%	19%
55 to 64	11%	7%	9%	9%	9%	6%	2%
65+	16%	7%	14%	14%	7%	3%	3%

* This category on the OPS survey is ages 18 to 24

Ethnicity

Table 4-4 compares the ethnic distribution of the survey respondents by region and to the state population. Overall, the ethnic distribution of the survey is quite similar to the state. However, the representation of minority groups in the survey is greater than their representation of the state population, except for Asian Americans. This is especially true for Native Americans, who make up five percent of survey respondents and only one percent of the state population. Native Americans were best represented in Eastern

⁷³ The Oregon Population Survey is a biennial random sample survey conducted by the Oregon Progress Board.

Oregon, while the largest percentage of African Americans was found in the North region, and the largest percentage of Hispanics was in the Valley.

Table 4-4: Ethnicity by region

Ethnicity	Oregon*	Total	North	Eastern	Central	Valley	Southern
White	88%	82%	76%	84%	91%	80%	88%
African American	2%	3%	12%	0%	0%	.2%	0%
Hispanic	6%	7%	4%	5%	4%	11%	4%
Native American	1%	3%	4%	7%	1%	2%	2%
Asian	3%	1%	1%	0%	1%	.8%	1%
Other		4%	2%	4%	3%	6%	6%

Source: Oregon Employment Department, Oregon State University Extension Service

Employment Status

Two survey questions referenced the respondents' employment status, Q-8 and Q-11. Q-8 asked for respondents to indicate the reasons why they were seeking energy assistance – unemployment was one option. Q-11 asked about the *household's* sources of income—full time employment, part-time employment, seasonal employment, etcetera. Table 4-5 shows that 41 percent of the respondents indicated that unemployment was the reason they were seeking energy assistance. About 24 percent of the respondents indicated that their households received income from full time employment, while 20 percent received income from part-time employment. About 17 percent indicated that their households earned income from seasonal employment, self-employment, or retirement income.

Table 4-5: Source of income by region

Employment Status	Total	North	Eastern	Central	Valley	Southern
Unemployed	41%	41%	40%	46%	40%	40%
Full-time employment	29%	22%	19%	32%	25%	27%
Part-time employment	20%	15%	17%	20%	22%	23%
Seasonal Employment	5%	5%	3%	6%	6%	6%
Self Employment	7%	6%	8%	7%	7%	11%
Retired	4%	5%	8%	5%	2%	3%

Income

Table 4-6 displays median and mean monthly income by region. The median monthly income for the entire sample was \$750. Regionally, median incomes ranged from \$665 in the Eastern region to \$792 in the Central region. Meanwhile, the mean monthly income for the sample was \$905, regionally ranging from \$829 in the Central Oregon to a high of \$970 in the Southern Oregon. The high mean value and low median value for Eastern Oregon is

interesting. This suggests that some number of respondents are earning significantly more than the median income of \$665.

Table 4-6: Median monthly income by region

Region	Median Income	Mean Income
Total	\$ 750	\$ 906
North	\$ 746	\$ 970
Eastern	\$ 665	\$ 931
Central	\$ 792	\$ 829
Valley	\$ 766	\$ 852
Southern	\$ 750	\$ 972

Food Security Analysis

A key objective of this study was to determine the food security levels of survey respondents, which was determined by the responses to the first five questions on the survey (Q-1 through Q-4b). CPW adapted these questions from the 1998 Oregon Food Bank Customer Profile survey and they are similar to the USDA six-question instrument being used in the 2000 Oregon Population Survey. This six-question format is a shortened version of the Food Security Measurement Project’s 18-question instrument described in Chapter Two. Because some questions are not identical to questions used by the USDA, CPW cannot use their method for determining food insecurity or hunger based on a person’s responses. *Thus, we use a slightly different method, which we believe accurately describes the levels of food insecurity and hunger of survey households.*

Like the USDA version, CPW’s survey questions refer only to the previous 12 months, and they ask about “certain experiences and behaviors known to characterize households that are having difficulty meeting basic food needs,” behaviors which “generally occur in an ordered sequence as the severity of food insecurity increases.⁷⁴” In Chapter Two, this was described as a “managed process” of increasingly drastic responses to increasingly severe household circumstances, ultimately leading to cutting the size of or skipping children’s meals.

Full sample results

Three of CPW’s survey questions can be considered questions that address less serious conditions associated with food insecurity. Q-1 asks, “How often do you worry about where your next meal is coming from?” Q-4 asks, “In the last 12 months how often were the following statements true? *We couldn’t afford to eat balanced meals (Q-4a); The food that we bought just didn’t last, and we didn’t have enough money to get more (Q-4b).* Figures 4-1 and 4-2 display the responses to these questions.

⁷⁴ Nord, Jemison, and Bickel, 1999. 15.

Figure 4-1 shows that nearly 85 percent of the respondents worried about where their next meal would come from at some point in the previous 12 months. Nearly 20 percent indicated they worried often or always, suggesting food insecurity for those individuals.

Figure 4-1: “How often do you worry about where your next meal is coming from?”

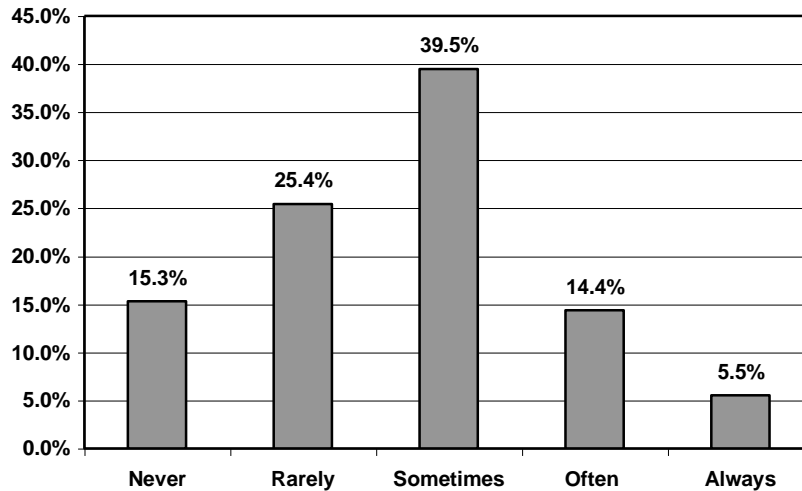
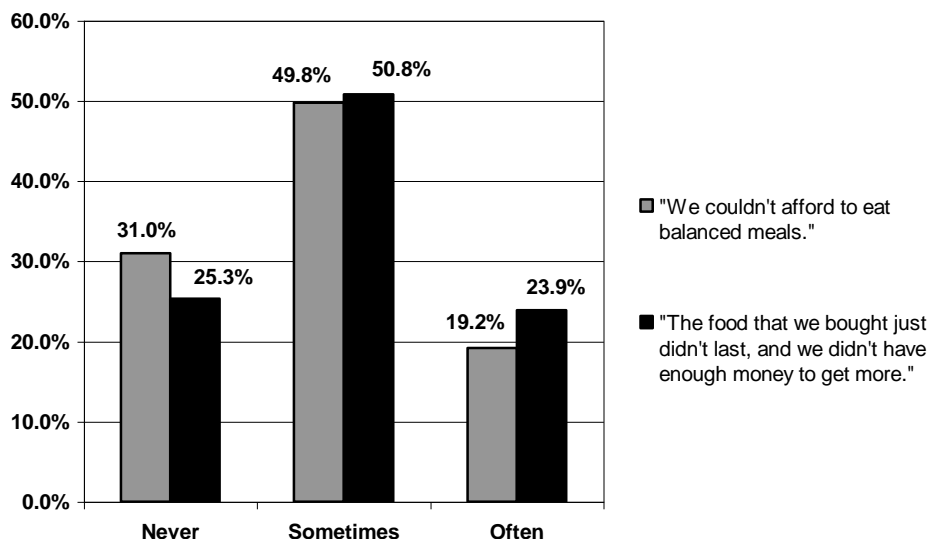


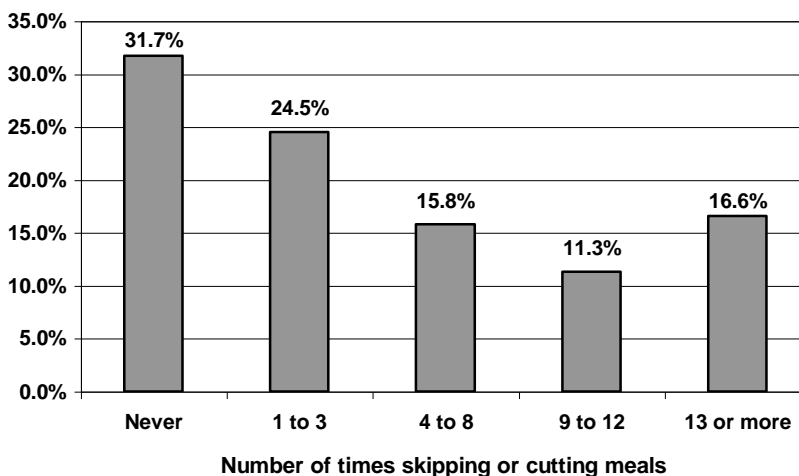
Figure 4-2 displays Parts A and B of Q-4. Sixty-nine percent of respondents indicated that in the past year, they could not always afford to eat balanced meals. On a more serious level, nearly 75 percent responded that, at some point in the past year, the food they bought did not last and they could not afford to buy any more. Twenty-five percent this situation occurred *often*, further suggesting substantial food insecurity or the incidence of hunger for these households.

Figure 4-2: “In the last 12 months, how often were the following statements true?”



Question 2 asked about situations that correspond to moderate stages of food insecurity – adults skipping meals or cutting the size of their own meals because there is not enough money for food. Figure 4-3 displays the results. This figure shows that 68 percent of respondents skipped or cut the size of their meals due to a lack of money for food. These people are can be considered to be experiencing some level of food insecurity.

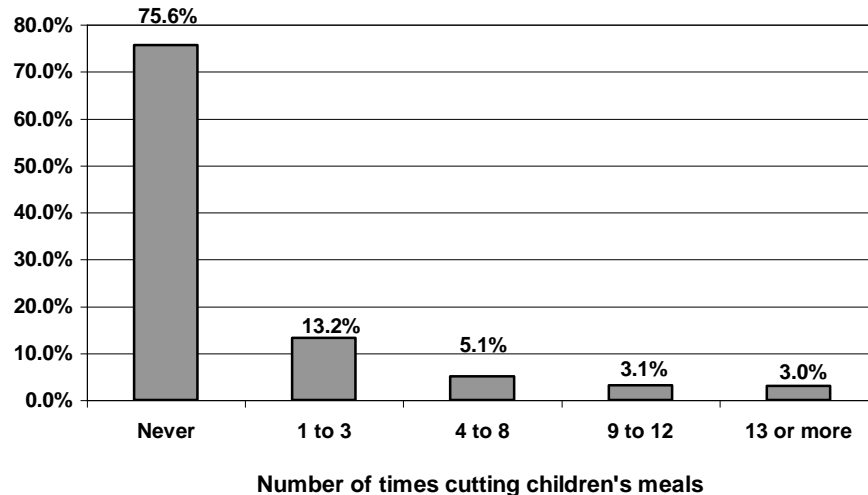
Figure 4-3: “In the last 12 months, how often did you (or other adult in your household) cut the size of meals or skip meals because there was not enough money for food?”



The third question asked about situations involving serious levels of food insecurity and hunger– cutting the size of one’s children’s meals due to a lack of money for food. Remember that in the sequence of responses to insufficient levels of food, cutting children’s meals is the most drastic measure. Seventy-seven percent of the survey respondents indicated that they did not experience this situation in the last twelve months, but the fact that 23 percent of our respondents answered this question affirmatively indicates that

these individuals are at high levels of food insecurity and hunger. Figure 4-4 displays the results.

Figure 4-4: “In the last 12 months, how often did you cut the size of your children’s meals because there was not enough money for food?”



Subgroup analysis

CPW wanted to compare the food insecurity levels of different survey population subgroups by region, ethnicity, household type, employment, and participation in food assistance programs. To accomplish this, CPW developed a mechanism to classify respondents into one of three categories—*food secure*, *moderate* food insecurity and hunger, and *high* food insecurity and hunger. We based this classification scheme upon the understanding that a household’s hunger coping strategies will become more drastic as its economic situation becomes increasingly unstable. After categorization, CPW would then be able to determine which subgroups experienced more or less severe levels of food insecurity and hunger.

For the food secure category, CPW selected all respondents who answered “Never” or “Rarely” on Q-1 and “Never” on Q-2 through Q-4, Part B. Responses of this nature do not indicate significant levels of food insecurity. Overall, CPW classified 13 percent of respondents as food secure.

For the high food insecurity and hunger category, CPW included any respondents who cut the size of their children’s meals at any point in the previous 12 months, as this question reflects serious levels of food insecurity and hunger. In addition, CPW included respondents that responded on the more severe end of three of the other four food security questions. This would capture those households *without children* experiencing substantial food insecurity. The more severe responses include an answer of “Often” or “Always” for Q-1, an answer of “9-12” times or “13 or more” times for Q-2, and an answer of “Often” for Question 4, Parts A and B. Nearly 25 percent of the respondents met these criteria.

Lastly, CPW placed survey respondents *not meeting* the food secure nor high food insecurity and hunger criteria into the moderate food insecurity category. This group included 63 percent of survey respondents.

Figure 4-5: Food security survey questions

Q-1. How often do you worry about where your next meal is coming from?

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

Q-2. In the last 12 months, how often did you (or other adult in your household) cut the size of meals or skip meals because there was not enough money for food?

Never 1-3 4-8 9-12 13 or more

Q-3. In the last 12 months, how often did you cut the size of your children's meals because there was not enough money for food?

Never 1-3 4-8 9-12 13 or more

Q-4. In the last 12 months, how often were the following statements true?

→ *"We couldn't afford to eat balanced meals."*

Never Sometimes Often

→ *"The food that we bought just didn't last, and we didn't have enough money to get more."*

Never Sometimes Often

Table 4-7 compares the regional distribution of food insecurity levels to the full survey population. The Valley appears to experience the most food insecurity, with 91 percent of Valley respondents at moderate or high levels. The reasons are not clear, but may be attributed to the relatively low mean income of the Valley respondents as compared to the others. From Table 4-6, the region's mean income was the second lowest. The food insecurity may also reflect higher costs of living in the Willamette Valley, however among the survey respondents, rents or house payments in this region were not the highest.

Table 4-7: Food insecurity risk levels by region

Region	# Responses	Food Secure	Moderate	High
North	340	14%	64%	23%
Eastern	156	19%	62%	19%
Central	154	16%	58%	26%
Valley	516	9%	63%	28%
Southern	194	12%	66%	22%
Total	1360	13%	63%	25%

Table 4-8 compares food insecurity and hunger across ethnic subgroups. By far, Hispanics and African Americans have the highest percentages in the high incidence category. The distribution of food insecurity levels for Whites reflects the total survey population, which makes sense considering that such a large percentage of the survey respondents were

white. The lowest levels of food insecurity were found amongst the Asian and Other groups. Because of the small number of responses from the various ethnic groups, caution should be taken when making generalizations.

Table 4-8: Food insecurity and hunger by ethnicity

Race	# Responses	Food Secure	Moderate	High
White	1061	13%	64%	23%
African American	40	8%	53%	40%
Hispanic	86	11%	49%	41%
Native American	40	13%	60%	28%
Asian	10	0%	80%	20%
Other	56	7%	77%	16%

Table 4-9 shows the food insecurity and hunger levels found for respondents classified by household type. Households headed by single mothers experience the most food insecurity. This is not surprising, given that single female households with children show the highest poverty rates in the 1990 Census. The household types with the next highest levels of food insecurity were two parent households and single parent males. One factor influencing this is that CPW placed any respondent answering affirmatively to the skipping children's meals question (Q-3) in the high incidence category. The results also suggest that the additional costs associated with raising children put all low-income parents at higher risk.

Table 4-9: Food insecurity and hunger by household type

Household Type	# Responses	Food Secure	Moderate	High
Single Parent Female	487	14%	56%	30%
Single Parent Male	63	16%	64%	21%
Single, no children	212	13%	72%	15%
Two Parents	397	10%	67%	23%
Two Adults, no children	110	11%	70%	19%

Table 4-10 displays the food insecurity and hunger distribution by employment status. The highest levels were found among self-employed and seasonal workers, followed by full-time workers. A surprising result is that full time workers reported greater levels of food insecurity than the unemployed and part-time workers. This could mean that full-time workers are earning incomes that preclude them from food stamp eligibility, but are insufficient to provide adequate food for themselves and their families. Retirees were among the most food secure of these groups; nevertheless, 24 percent are in high incidence situations.

Table 4-10: Food insecurity and hunger by employment status

Employment Status	# Responses	Food Secure	Moderate	High
Full Time	332	9%	63%	28%
Part Time	265	16%	61%	23%
Seasonal	72	8%	61%	31%
Self Employed	99	11%	54%	35%
Unemployed	555	9%	67%	25%
Retirement or Pension	53	13%	63%	24%

Table 4-11 compares food insecurity and hunger levels between food stamp recipients and non-food stamp recipients. Interestingly, both groups experience very similar levels. These results indicate that respondents who receive food stamps responded in similar ways to those not receiving food stamps. At first thought, food stamp users should experience less food insecurity. However, the median income of survey respondents who were non food stamp users was \$250 greater than those receiving those benefits. These higher incomes helped to reduce nonuser households' food insecurity. Food stamps, then, are reducing user households' food insecurity and hunger to levels similar to their non food stamp counterparts. Despite this analysis, the results indicate that households receiving food stamps are still experiencing significant levels of food insecurity and hunger.

Table 4-11: Food insecurity and hunger levels of Food Stamp recipients versus non Food Stamp recipients

Food Stamp Usage	Percent of Total	Food Secure	Moderate	High
Use Food Stamps	63%	13%	62%	25%
Do Not Use Food Stamps	27%	12%	64%	24%

Table 4-12 expands upon Table 4-11 to show the levels of food insecurity and hunger among those who receive food stamps, emergency food boxes, both of these, or neither. CPW used Q-5 to develop the program use categories. This question contained separate blanks for two different emergency food programs, "Food Boxes," and "Community Basket." For the purposes of this analysis we are considering anyone who checked either of these blanks to be recipients of emergency food. The difference between Tables 4-11 and 4-12 is that the non food stamp users in Table 4-11 could be accessing other food programs. In Table 4-12, the Food box or Community Basket Only category includes respondents using those programs and no others. The purpose was to attempt to isolate the impact of food boxes on food insecurity.

Table 4-12: Food insecurity and hunger levels by food program use

Program Usage	# Responses	Food Secure	Moderate	High
Food Stamps Only	441	19%	63%	18%
Food Box or Community Basket only	191	2%	64%	34%
Food Stamps and Food Box or Community Basket	417	7%	61%	32%
Neither program	311	18%	64%	18%

Table 4-12 shows that food stamp users and respondents that used neither food program had similar levels of food insecurity and hunger. One explanation is that individuals who are not seeking either program may be less in need of some form of food assistance. Thus, they fare just as well as food stamp users in terms of food insecurity. The table also shows that in situations where individuals are only receiving food boxes that there is a high incidence of food insecurity. The most interesting finding is perhaps counterintuitive: individuals receiving food stamps and who are also accessing emergency food assistance remain at high risks of food insecurity. Only seven percent of those participating in both programs are food secure, leaving 61 percent in moderate and 32 percent in high food insecurity and hunger. This suggests that households needing to access both are in very serious situations.

Use of Food Assistance Programs

The purpose of this section is to report the extent to which survey respondents access food assistance programs. Question 5 asks, “In the last 12 months, from which of these sources did you or a family member obtain food or food assistance?” Respondents could check more than one source. Table 4-13 summarizes the results. The programs are listed in descending order of usage based on the total survey response.

It is not surprising that the Food Stamp program had the highest level of participation among survey respondents. However, it is surprising that the second most commonly used source of food were friends, relatives, or neighbors. This could be interpreted as an indication of strong families, neighborhoods and communities, or as an indication of a failing public assistance system, which provokes individuals to seek help from these sources.

Another surprising finding here is the disparity found in the use of the Food Box Program. Respondents from the Valley and Southern region were at 48 percent and 45 percent respectively, while the other three regions hovered around 25 percent. Table 4-13 also shows a wide range of percentages for the school lunch and breakfast programs. Both had levels of use that were twice as high in the Valley as in Eastern Oregon. This may be due to the Eastern respondents having fewer school age children than the other regions. A similar such gap is found in the figures for the Summer Lunch program, although these percentages are quite low across the board.

Table 4-13: Sources of food assistance by region

Program	Total	North	Eastern	Central	Valley	Southern
Food Stamps	63%	56%	61%	60%	66%	72%
Friends, relatives, or neighbors	38%	32%	41%	31%	41%	41%
School Lunch	37%	30%	22%	35%	45%	39%
Food Box Program	36%	24%	26%	25%	48%	45%
School Breakfast	28%	21%	17%	31%	34%	30%
WIC	23%	19%	19%	29%	26%	21%
Community Basket	14%	14%	16%	16%	11%	20%
Home or community garden	6%	3%	3%	1%	10%	8%
Summer Lunch	6%	4%	3%	8%	8%	5%
Soup kitchen or homeless shelter	4%	2%	3%	4%	5%	3%
Gleaning group	4%	6%	4%	1%	5%	2%
Meals on Wheels	1%	3%	1%	1%	1%	1%

Q-7 asked, “In the last 12 months, what types of assistance did you receive and in what months of the year?” Respondents could choose from six different social service programs. They could also indicate which programs they had used in the previous year, and in which seasons they had used them (January to March, April to June, July to September, October to December).

Table 4-14 illustrates that respondents reported greater participation during the winter seasons of Jan-March and Oct-Dec, with a noticeable dip from April through September. One explanation is seasonal employment opportunities, especially in agricultural areas and popular tourist destinations. This reduces the number of eligible persons. Another explanation is most of the surveys were completed in the months of February and March, which may explain why greater usage is reported for all programs during this time period. Another factor at work is that memory is likely to be sharper in the short-term than in the long-term. Additionally, some respondents may have just encountered financial hardships and just begun to receive various forms of assistance in the current season.

Table 4-14: Use of assistance programs by season

Program Usage	Jan-March	April-June	July-Sept	Oct-Dec
Food Stamps	53%	39%	37%	43%
Energy Assistance	27%	4%	1%	7%
Food Boxes	26%	16%	18%	25%
Social Security Income	18%	16%	16%	16%
Rental Assistance	16%	11%	11%	13%
Oregon Health Plan	47%	38%	38%	40%

Table 4-15 compares the use of food assistance programs across different employment status to investigate whether employment influenced what programs people participated in. Full time workers and retirees were less likely to be using any of the programs included in this analysis. The unemployed were at the opposite end of the scale, as the greatest percentage of this group was receiving both forms of food assistance. These findings appear reasonable and consistent with intuition.

Table 4-15: Use of Food Assistance Programs by employment status

Employment Status	Food Stamps Only	Emergency food boxes*	Food Stamps and emergency food boxes	None of the Above
Unemployed	32%	13%	38%	17%
Employed	33%	15%	26%	27%
Full-Time	25%	23%	25%	28%
Part-Time	30%	16%	29%	24%
Seasonal	25%	24%	32%	19%
Retired	26%	13%	23%	38%

* This includes the Food Box and Community Basket Programs

Conclusion

The survey results demonstrate dramatic levels of food insecurity and hunger among the survey population. Our research finds that 25 percent of survey respondents experience high levels of food insecurity and hunger. This means that one in four households surveyed *frequently* worry about where their next meals will be coming from, are unable to afford balanced diets or afford to buy enough food that will last, and are cutting the size of or skipping adult and children’s meals because they have no more money to buy food. Another 63 percent of those surveyed experience moderate levels of food insecurity and hunger. These families also worry about where their next meal will be coming from, sometimes resort to skipping or cutting the size of adult meals, and cannot always afford to eat balanced meals or afford to have buy enough food that will last, albeit less frequently.

Because the composition of the survey sample may not be statistically representative of Oregon’s low-income residents, it is not possible to apply the results to the broader population. However, CPW believes that the composition and size of our survey sample is

sufficient to make legitimate statements about the food insecurity of low-income Oregonians. Our results indicate that food insecurity and hunger are particularly prevalent among households headed by single women, African-Americans, and Latinos. The actual percentages associated with food insecurity levels are less important than the story the results tell: Food insecurity and hunger threatens the physical and psychological health of many low-income Oregonians. It is not a mythical problem created by politics. The next chapter describes the factors that put low-income households at risk of hunger and food insecurity.

Chapter Five: Focus Group Analysis

In Chapter Four, CPW concluded that 88 percent of the survey respondents suffered from moderate or high food insecurity or hunger. To learn why these households are struggling to obtain enough food, CPW designed focus groups with at-risk individuals as well as social service personnel who work directly with them. In Portland, Bend, Pendleton, Coos Bay and Salem, CPW conducted ten two-hour discussions, one focus group with low-income clients and another with social service agency personnel in each community. A total of 48 clients and 52 agency personnel participated in the meetings.

The first question at each focus group was, “What are the contributing factors to hunger in your community?” In addition to listing the factors, CPW facilitated discussions about how local and federal food programs are meeting community food needs, identified barriers to finding employment, and brainstormed potential community and state level hunger solutions.

Across the state CPW heard similar stories. Low-income participants recounted the daily frustrations and challenges they face to put food on the table. Agency personnel expressed compassion for the people they work with, and shared comments about current local and federal programs. Both groups forwarded ideas for improvements to local and federal programs as well as their visions for innovative community programs.

Factors

The ten focus group meetings identified a total of 75 factors that contribute to hunger and food insecurity. Some factors were mentioned in a number of the focus groups; others were only mentioned once or twice—often representing a particular concern in a specific community. CPW organized the 75 factors into five general categories:

- Access to Services
- Cost of Living
- Barriers to Employment
- Transportation
- Skills, Knowledge, and Values

This chapter describes each category, including a number of sub-categories that fall within the general heading. The descriptions reference focus group discussions and use quotes to illustrate ideas. The complete list of factors is located in Appendix B.

Solutions

The focus groups also yielded a total of 220 solution ideas. CPW encouraged participants to think about short-term solutions that focus on improving programs for getting food to hungry people, and long-term solutions that address contributing factors or root causes.

CPW also encouraged participants to think about solutions that could be implemented at both the community level and state or federal levels.

For simplicity, CPW organized the solutions into themes that correspond to the factor categories. The relevant solution themes are listed after each factor description. In addition, relevant ICCH policy recommendations are listed to reflect current activity at the state level.⁷⁵

A complete list of the original focus group solutions is listed in Appendix B.

Summary of factors

Factor One: Access To Services

Both client and agency participants consistently discussed the issue of access to services in all the focus groups. As Oregon's low-income households juggle tough financial choices, they rely on assistance from local and federal food and income support programs. These programs have a substantial impact when household budgets are tight—Food Stamps or a food box can make the difference between a nourishing meal and an empty plate. Although these services do not offer long-term solutions, they do play a major role in limiting the severity of hunger and food insecurity. Difficulty accessing these services threatens the food security of at-risk households.

Lack of awareness about services

In each focus group, CPW asked participants to identify the food assistance resources in their community. Most participants were aware of the major programs (Food Stamps, WIC, School Lunch, food banks), but a smaller number were aware of the wider network of community social service programs. Interestingly, the focus group provided an informal opportunity for participants to share information about various resources (what is offered, when it is offered, and how it is offered). Hence, it was clear that increased outreach is needed.

Other concerns:

- Hispanic focus group participants emphasized the lack of available resource materials in Spanish.
- Participants in Pendleton and Coos Bay were concerned about outreach to rural residents.
- Participants emphasized the need for social service agency staff to work closely together in providing resource and referral information.
- In several communities there was strong sentiment that AFS caseworkers should do a better job of informing clients about all available resources. Likewise, emergency food providers should connect clients with other non-food resources.

⁷⁵ ICCH recommendations as of April 2000 presentation to Governor.

Food Stamp Program difficulties

Both client and agency focus group participants said that accessing the Food Stamp Program has become increasingly difficult. This difficulty impacts the ability of low-income households to balance household expenses and purchase enough food for themselves or their families. Comments about the Food Stamp Program revolved around the complicated application process, strict eligibility requirements, and low benefit levels.

- **Application process:** Participants stated that the application process for Food Stamp benefits was too complicated. A common refrain was, “too much documentation—too many hoops to jump through.” According to one agency leader, “verification is the most difficult thing—it causes problems for workers and clients, the system can make people come back 4-5 times.” Participants also discussed the difficult challenge of applying if you are mentally ill, disabled, or a senior citizen.

For those able to complete the paperwork, some are successful in receiving benefits while others say that computer glitches, misunderstandings about follow-up, or sudden changes in eligibility left them without assistance. One woman said, “I applied and got accepted (for Food Stamps), but the next month they said I was no longer eligible with the same income and situation—this is confusing.” Participants wanted clearer explanations from caseworkers to demystify the process. Daytime appointments also presented time conflicts for the working poor, while simply getting to the AFS office was difficult for those without access to public or private transportation.

- **Eligibility requirements:** Lengthy discussions emerged from the topic of Food Stamp eligibility requirements, and in particular, the income and resource limits. Client participants were concerned about the number of people working full-time, and earning incomes that were not sufficient to meet household budget pressures and yet disqualified them from Food Stamp eligibility. One single mother in Bend said, “there is too much emphasis on the numbers—sometimes it’s the \$1 and boom...your Food Stamps are gone.” A Portland mother stated, “I make \$8 per hour gross which is \$25 too much to receive food stamps—I would like to pay that extra \$25 to the government so that I can receive food stamps.”

Another concern related to the resource limits associated with car ownership. Currently, eligibility rules count the amount of a vehicle’s fair market value over \$4,650 towards the household’s resource limits, which in most cases is \$2,000.⁷⁶ Thus, barring any other household resources such as bank accounts, IRAs, stocks, bonds, or real property, households with a vehicle valued at \$6,650 or more are ineligible for food stamps. One client participant summarized this issue and said, “to get food stamps, I can’t have reliable transportation.”

Oregon recently applied for a state waiver that allows exclusion of the value of one vehicle per household and would count the equity value of all other vehicles up to \$10,000. President Clinton also proposed federal legislation that would exclude the one vehicle, but only if the equity value is less than \$1,000. The Oregon waiver

⁷⁶ Resource limits are \$3,000 for households where at least one member is age 60 or over \$10,000 when at least one member is working under a JOBS Plus agreement, and \$2,000 for all other cases.

would provide a wider range of eligibility to low-income families than the Clinton legislation. The state is still waiting on approval of the waiver.⁷⁷

- **Benefit levels:** In addition to the application and eligibility challenges, focus group participants felt that benefits levels were too low and not tailored to meet their individual family needs. For example, participants thought that benefit levels should not be solely based on the number of children but also the age of the child—because teenagers eat more food than toddlers.

Client participants also believed that benefit levels were based upon caseworker discretion, and inconsistency across caseworkers added instability to the Food Stamp process. To emphasize this point, one woman in Bend said, “Your benefit levels depend upon who your caseworker is.” In addition, clients made negative comments about the effects of caseworker overload on service and the feeling that caseworkers over-personalize and “act like they are writing you a check from their own checkbook.”

Stigma

Focus group participants generally praised the Oregon Trail Card for reducing the embarrassment associated with using food stamps. Nevertheless, many people still experience psychological discomfort when applying for and receiving public assistance. Both client and agency participants believed that the stigma attached to food stamps and welfare discourages eligible persons from seeking assistance. Client participants in Bend discussed this most convincingly because they live in a small community characterized by a large disparity between rich and poor. A mother in Bend said, “I still have to prepare myself mentally to use food stamps...my 16 year-old still hides out in the car...I wait until nobody is in line to use my cash, Food Stamps, WIC and other coupons.” Agency participants felt that welfare reform has aggravated stigma because now everyone feels an increased pressure to avoid public assistance.

Service accessibility

Client participants said that daytime hours of operation for most social service providers is a challenge for the working poor. Many agencies are working to address this concern, expanding hours and days of service. Transportation to office locations is also difficult, especially in communities with limited or no public transportation, as in Bend and Pendleton, or in situations when individuals need to visit multiple agencies sites.

Emergency food access

In contrast to Food Stamps, client participants appreciated the relative simplicity of obtaining emergency food. Still, there were complaints about the quality of food box items and the frequency with which individuals were able to receive a food box. One woman in Coos Bay said, “you can only get a food box once a month in Bandon, which is not enough...it only lasts for three days.” As a counterpoint, food boxes should generally only last a family three to five days. When asked how the emergency food system could be improved, participants naturally wanted more meats and fresh produce and less canned

⁷⁷ Telephone interview with Anne Hilgers, Food Stamp Program Analyst, 6/23/2000.

goods. Some commented that some of the food they receive in food boxes goes uneaten because children will not eat it.

These concerns point to larger issues within the food assistance system. The emergency food system was created for emergency situations, not ongoing reliance. Yet, demand for emergency food is increasing at the same time food stamp participation rates are decreasing. Agency participants felt that these trends suggest the food banks' role is no longer the safety net under the federal programs, but the reverse. Due to increased demand on emergency food providers, agency participants recognized a need to expand the capacity of storage facilities to handle the increased amounts of food flowing through the system.

Hispanic concerns

Hispanic focus group participants in Salem reported that language barriers, the fear of deportation, and discrimination introduced additional difficulties to accessing social services. Of the eight participants, not one was receiving Food Stamps, TANF, or had health insurance, but all were receiving emergency food services. They also discussed their inability to access certain services as illegal immigrants and the lengthy challenge of attaining citizenship.

Solution themes

- Increase funding to expand food bank facilities to meet the growing need for emergency food.
- Increase outreach about available resources, encouraging social service and food bank staff to refer clients to all appropriate services.
- Expand agency hours (evenings and weekends) to accommodate time constraints of working families.
- Develop Food Stamp Program mechanisms that better address individual household circumstances, i.e. differing food needs for two teenagers and young children.
- Increase agency coordination and partnership to avoid duplication—increase efficiency and better serve clients through one-stop shopping.
- Integrate social service agency databases and develop a shared intake form to reduce paperwork and verification burdens.
- Increase access to food stamps and other income support programs during the transition from welfare to work.
- Examine the AFS eligibility requirements and benefit levels in relation to the cost of living.

Related ICCH policy recommendations

- Provide for an investment (to be matched by federal outreach funds) sufficient to fund a comprehensive Food Stamp statewide outreach campaign using promising practices currently being tested, including the toll-free hotline, outreach materials, and staffing.

- Support the “Hunger Relief Act” (S. 1805) and the “Food Stamp Outreach and Research for Kids Act” (S. 1800/H.R. 2738) at the federal level.
- Evaluate the current Assessment model to ensure that families who are diverted still receive the assistance they need, such as Food Stamps and health coverage.
- Provide for an investment sufficient to fund outreach and start-up costs for the expansion of school breakfast, summer food, and after-school snack programs.
- Expand Summer Food Service Programs in all communities that have schools serving lunch to 50% or more low-income children.

Factor Two: Income and Cost Of Living

Another factor to which focus group participants devoted considerable discussion was the combination of low incomes and rising costs of living for Oregon’s poor. Client participants spoke of the challenges of juggling food, housing, child-care, transportation, and medical costs, while trying to feed their household. Reflecting the “managed process” idea related to food insecurity and hunger, one low-income Pendleton participant commented, “You have to give up some things, and the food budget gets sacrificed.” For example, little flexibility is afforded to monthly rent, with eviction being a very serious consequence. By contrast, families can manage food intake by eating less or substituting foods with greater nutritional value with food that is less expensive.

Poverty and inequality

Poverty and hunger are inextricably linked, and as Chapter Two described, in the past poverty rates served as a proxy for hunger measurement. According to the 1998 Oregon Population Survey, 11.8 percent of Oregonians were living in poverty; for children under age 18 the rate was nearly 16 percent. That same year, the national poverty rate was 12.7 percent, and 18.9 percent for children under 18. While Oregon’s poverty is below the national average, it’s food insecurity and hunger levels are some of the highest in the country. This inconsistency has provoked state government to examine the way it is approaching food insecurity issues.

One clue may be found by looking at the growing income inequalities between the wealthiest 20 percent of Oregon families and the poorest 20 percent. A study released in January 2000 by the Economic Policy Institute and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities examined these income trends from the late 1970s to 1998 and found that the inflation-adjusted income of the Oregon’s wealthiest one-fifth grew by 52 percent. By contrast, the inflation-adjusted income of Oregon’s poorest one-fifth fell by 13 percent. Moreover, since the late 1980s, the income of the wealthiest fifth increased by 38 percent, while the income of the poorest fell by 14 percent. This income disparity represented the largest gap in the nation.⁷⁸ Not surprisingly, the researchers found that the primary factor driving income inequality was the growing wage gap. Wages at the bottom and middle of

⁷⁸ Pulling Apart: A State-by-State Analysis of Income Trends. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and the Economic Policy Institute. January 2000. <http://www.cbpp.org/1-18-00sfp-or.pdf>

the wage scale have fallen or remained stagnant, while wages at the top end have risen significantly over the last twenty years.⁷⁹

Wages and the economy

Despite Oregon's high minimum wage relative to other states, focus group participants stated that, in many cases, the incomes they earn are not enough to meet household needs. As one Pendleton participant said, "the cost of living is rising faster than the minimum wage and the minimum wage is not sufficient for the cost of living." Agency participants also noted that the Oregon economy's shift from a manufacturing to service base has negatively impacted the wage levels of lower skilled workers.

According to a 1999 study by the Northwest Policy Center, there is a difference between the minimum wage and a "living wage." The Northwest Policy Center determined the "living wage" by calculating the minimum needed to cover the average costs of most basic expenses such as food, housing and utilities, transportation, health care, and child-care. Their calculations for an hourly "minimum living wage" in Oregon ranged from \$10.07 for a single adult to \$16.36 for a single adult with a toddler and a school-age child. The study showed that 47 percent of job openings in Oregon pay less than the \$10.07 per hour wage for a single adult, and 77 percent paid less than the \$16.36 per hour wage for a single adult with two children.⁸⁰ The Northwest Policy Center's findings suggest that the Oregon economy is not creating enough livable wage jobs.

The focus groups revealed that many low-income people are taking these low-paying service sector jobs due to their lack of skills and education, as well as the pressure to move from welfare to work. Many expressed frustration with the fact that their wages are often insufficient to cover household expenses, but too much to be eligible for food stamps. Equally frustrating was the "dead-end reality" of service sector jobs. A single mother in Bend asked rhetorically, "How does a service job translate into a career?"

Cost of living

Because food insecurity and hunger is due to insufficient food intake due to insufficient financial resources, focus group participants explained that rising costs of living have a direct impact upon the amount of money they have available for food.

- **Housing:** Client participants stated that finding affordable housing was often a difficult prospect. According to Oregon Employment Department, home prices in the state increased by 88 percent from 1990 to 1997. A factor in rising housing costs is the high population growth over the last decade. Even though these migrants are centered on Portland and Eugene/Springfield, this abundance of new residents has driven up home prices statewide.⁸¹ Bend is also one of the fastest growing communities on the West Coast.

A common indicator of households experiencing high housing costs is "cost burden."

⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 35.

⁸⁰ Northwest Job Gap Study: Searching for Work that Pays, Northwest Policy Center and Northwest Federation of Community Organizations, January 1999.

⁸¹ *A Portrait of Poverty in Oregon*, Oregon State University Extension Service, January 2000.

Households spending over 30 percent of their income on housing costs (including utilities) are suffering cost burden. According to the Oregon Progress Board, approximately 25 percent of all Oregon households experienced cost burden in 1998. However, the percentage of renters who experience cost burden has risen from 59 percent in 1990 to 70 percent in 1998.⁸² Based on CPW's survey results, 70 percent of respondents spent more than 30 percent of their income on rent or house payments and 34 percent spent at least 60 percent.

- **Childcare:** Childcare costs present a formidable obstacle to low-income households, especially single parent headed households. According to the Oregon Population Survey, the median weekly child-care cost in the state was \$240 in 1998. Furthermore, the Progress Board found that childcare was “affordable” for only 67 percent of the state’s families in 1998, a level that has remained relatively stable since 1992.⁸³ One client participant in Bend said that she pays \$8 per hour for child-care when she earns less than that amount. CPW’s survey found that individuals who responded to the childcare question paid an average of \$155 per month for childcare.
- **Child support:** The focus groups revealed that single mothers are struggling to obtain child support payments from fathers. The Progress Board found that only 68 percent of court-ordered child support is actually paid to families.⁸⁴ Of the 486 single mothers who responded to CPW’s survey, only 21.6 percent were receiving child support.

Further complicating the issue is that child support is counted as anticipated income for public assistance benefits. Several focus group participants indicated due to the unstable employment status of their former partners, these dollars can be inconsistent. Additionally for TANF clients, if child support collected is less than their TANF benefit, then all of the child support goes to AFS. For mothers in the JOBS Plus program or in the assessment stage all of the child support dollars “pass through” to the woman.⁸⁵ Unfortunately, the system can also fail the women because as men catch on they may try to outsmart the system. One woman in Pendleton said, “My ex-husband works under the table and doesn’t pay child support.” In other cases, mothers agree to be paid under the table so that they can continue to collect their public assistance benefits.

- **Health care:** Participants briefly discussed health care costs across the state. Given the availability of the Oregon Health Plan, the comments were minimal and mainly revolved around the cost of special health needs, prescriptions for the senior citizens, and the cost of health insurance premiums once a person was no longer eligible for the Oregon Health Plan and their employer did not provide medical benefits.
- **Food costs:** Participants in every community noted the difficulties with rising food costs. Low-income participants felt that healthy food—fresh meats, dairy, and produce—were particularly expensive. Those with special dietary needs like diabetics experienced more acute impacts of high food prices. Faced with these

⁸² Oregon Progress Board, 1999 Benchmark Performance Summary, p. 58.

⁸³ Oregon Progress Board, 1999 Benchmark Performance Summary.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Telephone interview with Anne Hilgers, Food Stamp Program Analyst, 6.23/2000.

expenses, participants explained that they chose less expensive alternatives, which were often less nutritious food items. The Hispanic focus group noted that families resort to activities as severe as buying stolen meat resold in their neighborhood. One Portland mother said, “My kids eat top ramen for days on end so they do not go hungry.”

- **Welfare to Work transition:** As mentioned before, participants explained that as their wages increased, benefits decreased or were terminated, leaving a household stuck in a cycle of poverty. Time and time again, participants described the emotional frustration and demoralization of working hard but never getting ahead. Several participants said that they wanted to work to build self-esteem and set positive examples for their children. However, they explained that if working meant losing household income then what choice did they really have? In the end, focus group participants said program cut-offs are too severe and that in order to pay for basic needs and eventually become truly self-sufficient, a more gradual phase-out of benefits is needed.

Solution themes

- Increase support for affordable housing.
- Focus economic development efforts on businesses paying livable wages through use of incentives.
- Increase child-care support, including reducing the employment related day care (ERDC) co-pay for people in low wage jobs.
- Increase outreach about incentives for businesses that provide child-care and health benefits.
- Address the need for additional welfare-to-work transitional income supports.
- Support to innovative community-based programs like community kitchens, community gardens, skills exchanges, childcare cooperatives, and food buying cooperatives.
- Evaluate Oregon Health Plan eligibility for those earning above 100 percent of the federal poverty level.

Related ICCH policy recommendations

- Make the State Earned Income and Working Family Tax Credits refundable.
- Make a significant investment in affordable housing, both on increased rental assistance and increased number of affordable units.
- Revise the child-care subsidy program(s) to lower co-payments and decrease coverage more slowly as wages rise.

Factor Three: Barriers To Employment

If we understand hunger and food insecurity as a function of poverty, then one of the most straightforward solutions is providing employment that gives people the resources to adequately feed themselves and their families. Aside from the systemic economic realities that make livable wage jobs difficult to find, many low-income individuals face other barriers to finding and maintaining employment. Focus group participants noted that a lack of quality, affordable child-care, lack of family-friendly employers, lack of education and skills, and discrimination were the most formidable barriers to employment. Participants also mentioned language barriers, citizenship status, disabilities, mental health issues, drug and alcohol addiction, domestic violence, teen pregnancy, and homelessness.

Childcare

Factor Two focused on the costs of childcare and how they impact a household's budget. Above and beyond that, focus group participants explained that lack of childcare presents a considerable barrier to simply maintaining employment, especially for single parent households. Participants recounted stories of losing jobs because they had to stay at home too often to care for sick children. They also said that lack of childcare limits their choices for work. According to one mother in Pendleton, "the businesses around here are not family-oriented. If kids get sick too much, you can lose your job. There aren't many people to watch sick kids." Another mother in Bend added, "I've never missed work because of being sick, but I've had to leave a six-year old home sick by himself."

Across the client focus groups, participants reported difficulties in finding quality affordable childcare, especially for parents working swing or graveyard shifts. Mothers also reported a lack of infant and toddler care and general scarcity of child-care in rural areas. One mother in Bend said, "People are forced to use cheap childcare because of low wages and because AFS only covers part of the childcare expense." The ERDC program and the State Child Care Division are both working on improving childcare support and programs. Two key challenges identified by the Child Care Division are to: "expand child-care for parents who work non-traditional hours" and "increase the number of providers who serve infants and toddlers."⁸⁶

Lack of education and skills

Lack of education and skills poses another barrier to finding employment. In Portland, agency and community leaders noted that, "the education system is lacking—young people are dropping out—much of the Oregon workforce does not meet basic skills." In a June 2000 Oregonian article, the four-year dropout rate for the graduating class of 1999 was 22 percent.⁸⁷ Another report released by the Anne E. Casey Foundation in June 2000 found that 13 percent of Oregon teenagers ages 16 to 19 dropped out of high school in 1997; an increase from 8 percent in 1990.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ <http://findit.emp.state.or.us/childcare/govsbudget.cfm>

⁸⁷ http://www.oregonlive.com/special/series/dropouts.ssf?/news/oregonian/00/06/lc_12drop25x.frame

⁸⁸ Researchers used data from the Current Population Survey maintained by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Data from 1996 to 1998 was averaged for 1997 results. http://www.aecf.org/cgi-bin/kconline.cgi?KC_REQUEST=QUERY_PROFILES&FROMPAGE=PROFILE1&STATE=OR.

There is a strong correlation between education and income. Focus group participants extolled the benefits of JOBS and JOBS Plus, in addition to the training offered by other social service organizations. However, both agency and client participants felt a need for more education. Clients were frustrated about the lack of financial support for people enrolling in post-secondary education. A woman in Pendleton said, “I’ve been on assistance for four years and if I could have gotten a degree in two years, I never would have to ask for assistance again.”

Reinforcing this statement, one young woman in Coos Bay shared, “I have lots of experience, but I can’t get a job because I don’t have an AA degree.”

Other barriers

- Transportation issues—not having a vehicle severely limits the range of available job opportunities. If public transportation is available, extra time and effort is required to get to and from work.
- Language, citizenship status, and discrimination for Hispanic residents

Solution themes

- Expand the availability of quality, affordable child-care.
- Support businesses who are flexible with single parents; needs to balance work and family responsibilities.
- Reduce the high school drop out rate and the teen pregnancy rate.
- Provide increased state funding for educational training through AFS and other community programs.
- Increase state funding for alcohol, drug, and mental health treatment programs.

Related ICCH policy recommendations

- Encourage the continued discussion of the right mix of work, educational and training opportunities in TANF.

Factor Four: Transportation

Focus group participants reported that transportation issues, in multiple ways, are a major contributing factor to their risk of food insecurity. It is a core factor that directly impacts all of the other factors described in this report. Without reliable transportation a person cannot get to a job, bring their kids to child-care, go to the grocery store, or access social services. Low-income families without cars that live in small cities or rural communities with limited or no public transportation services are in especially precarious conditions. Even in the urban areas of Portland, Salem, Eugene, and Medford that have more extensive systems, the limits of public transportation put households without an automobile at a distinct disadvantage.

Lack of public transportation

In Bend and Pendleton, transportation was recognized as the single largest issue by both the client and agency focus groups. One mother in Pendleton said, “we need public transportation to get the kids to daycare, to go to work, the food bank. It could solve a lot of problems here.” According to a single mother in Bend, “I think we’re the largest city in America without public transportation and the cheap stores are far out of town and inaccessible.”

In Bend, there are dial-a-ride services for seniors and people with disabilities who reside in and within 5 miles of each of the communities in the region. The Community Partnership Team uses volunteer drivers to provide medical and waived rides for low-income clients. Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers (IVC) provides a similar service. Head Start offers rides to and from class for students, and parents are allowed to ride along—while several agencies like AFS provide transportation assistance vouchers to their clients. Sandra Strieby, a transportation planner with the Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council, said she often hears that the “lack of transportation is the greatest barrier to full employment in the region.” Strieby heads a committee examining regional transportation issues and the City of Bend is planning to include a funding levy on the November 2000 ballot.⁸⁹

Limited transportation

In Coos Bay, public transportation has service hours from 8 A.M. to 5 P.M. However these hours and infrequent routes make it difficult to use the bus to get to work. One mother shared her struggle with taking the bus to work and described how first she had to bring her children to child-care and then wait another hour for the next bus to get to work. The woman could not return from work because the buses had stopped their routes for the day. For people who work a swing or graveyard shift there is no option of public transportation.

Limited access to food and services

Lack of transportation also has a more direct impact on hunger and food insecurity. One Coos Bay mother said, “I cannot afford a car, car insurance, or car upkeep costs. I’m a single mom with an infant and there is no store within walking distance. So I get a ride from somebody else when I can, otherwise I go without food.” Participants explained the difficulty of carrying groceries or a food box on the bus, especially if the parent is managing several children. Even in Northeast Portland, residents commented on the exodus of grocery stores from their neighborhoods, leaving them to shop at higher priced convenience stores. They complained that the large low cost grocery stores were in the suburbs, making them inaccessible to inner city residents.

Transportation issues also impact a person’s ability to access services—whether it is getting to the AFS office for an appointment or to a social service agency for a food box. As mentioned under Factor One, owning a car can also make a household ineligible for Food Stamp benefits.

⁸⁹ Phone and e-mail correspondence with Sandra Strieby, 6/23/2000..

Solution themes

- Recognize that transportation is a necessity.
- Establish public transportation where needed, particularly Bend and Pendleton.
- Expand hours of public transit operation to meet the needs of the low-income, working population (Coos Bay).
- Offer incentives to businesses that provide transportation for their employees.

Factor Five: Skills, Knowledge, and Values

Factor Five combines loosely connected themes of contributing factors that CPW felt should be included in this chapter, not merely relegated to an Appendix. So far, many of the factors have pointed to larger, structural issues that are contributing to risk of hunger and food insecurity. This factor touches on aspects that are on a more personal or individual level. For example, focus group participants noted a lack of personal knowledge about nutrition, cooking, and food budgeting skills.

Cooking skills and nutrition knowledge

Across the agency focus groups there was a sentiment that knowledge about nutrition and cooking skills are rapidly being lost. One agency participant said, “Kids don’t know how to cook, they throw things in the microwave.” Older client participants shared these sentiments. Agency participants suggested developing programs that connect senior citizens and young people, and allow them to share cooking and nutrition knowledge. Other participants felt home economics classes should be reintroduced into schools’ curricula. Overall, the agency participants wanted to see increased cooking, meal planning, and nutrition education.

Food choices

Focus group participants appreciated the freedom to make their own food choices under the Food Stamp Program. Having the freedom to buy a treat for himself or herself or the family was a simple but great joy. Some participants did complain about not being able to buy diapers, toilet paper, and other similar products. Still, other participants felt that the Food Stamp Program should place more limits upon what people are able to buy. One woman said that buying steaks was not the best use of limited food stamp dollars.

Priorities and values

Agency participants also expressed concern about how the cultural pressures of America’s consumer economy compete for very limited household dollars. In addition, agency participants noted the increased social acceptance of debt accumulation as a means to keep up with the neighbors. This can translate into the purchase of items like cable television versus basic necessities. There are also people who choose to purchase drugs, alcohol, or cigarettes with limited food dollars.

Community awareness

The lack of community awareness about hunger concerned focus group participants in every community. In Coos Bay, agency personnel said, “The community is not aware of the hunger problem and there is a lack of education on hunger issues.” Some presented the issue as residents being in a state of denial and not acknowledging the problem. Another agency representative said, “We don’t see people starving here.”

According to participants in Bend, sharper class issues exist between the wealthy and the poor. One woman said fiercely, “There is an inability (in Bend) for people to step down off their high horse and get into the gutter and feed people.” Agency leaders added, “The upper-class does not want to admit that there are social issues here.” Participants called for increased community education focused on the complexity of the hunger problem. They explained that increased education leads to greater awareness, which will in turn mobilize the community to work together to address the problems of hunger and poverty.

Solution themes

- Offer nutrition education, menu planning, and cooking classes in every community.
- Develop connections between seniors and youth to share nutrition and cooking knowledge.
- Bring home economics back into the schools.
- Increase community awareness about hunger through outreach, local hunger task forces, and community dialogues.
- Emphasize community collaboration and partnerships.

Conclusion

Chapter Five reported the factors causing hunger and food insecurity and potential solution ideas, *as identified by the client and agency focus group participants*. The broad list of factors, ranging from an economy that does not create enough living wage employment, to strict food stamp eligibility rules, to young people’s lack of cooking skills, demonstrate that the problem of hunger and food insecurity is very complex. While this chapter may have been constructed methodically, CPW did attempt to convey the emotion of the focus group meetings by including our participants’ voices.

Interestingly, low-income and agency participants did not identify two public policy solutions that are receiving attention by those involved in policy discussions—raising the minimum wage and making the Earned Income Tax Credit refundable. These two options should not be overlooked in the range of policy solutions. Raising the minimum wage directly increases the income of those most likely experiencing food insecurity and hunger. Making the Earned Income Tax Credit refundable is another direct way to increase the income of low-income residents. Currently, those households with zero income tax liability (because they do not earn enough income) cannot take the credit because they pay no tax to credit from. By making the credit refundable, households most in need can receive the benefit the Earned Income Tax Credit was designed to provide to low-income residents.

The breadth of solution ideas reflects the breadth of factors identified. They represent a good starting point from which strategize about how positive changes can be made to reduce hunger and food insecurity in Oregon. More research is needed to determine the viability and acceptability of these solutions and how they can be developed in complementary ways.

The full list of factors and solutions can be found in Appendix B, page B-7.

Chapter Six: Conclusions

The prevalence of food insecurity and hunger in the United States within the context of the nation's economic prosperity and technological advancements is disturbing. At a time of unprecedented levels of wealth creation, millions of Americans still do not have enough to eat. In Chapter Two, we described the Depression era conception of hunger as a “paradox of want amid plenty.” All indications show that a similar paradox persists today.

The issue of food insecurity and hunger is particularly acute in Oregon. The most sophisticated methods of measuring hunger say that the state experiences some of the highest levels in the country. Consistent with the USDA findings, Community Planning Workshop's research finds substantial hunger and food insecurity among low-income households in the state. Twenty-five percent of our survey respondents experience high levels of food insecurity and hunger. Another 63 percent face moderate levels.

For the 25 percent found to suffer high food insecurity:

- They often or always worry about where their next meal is coming from.
- Adults cut the size of or skipped meals over 9 times in the last 12 months.
- Children were forced cut the size of or skipped meals at least once and as often as 13 or more times in the last 12 months.
- They often cannot afford to eat balanced meals.
- The food that households purchased often did not last and they could not afford to buy more.

In addition, CPW finds many factors weaken the ability of poor households to feed their families. These factors include causal elements from the national and international down to the household level.

CPW draws the following conclusions from our research:

- **The risk of hunger and food insecurity for low-income Oregonians is real and substantial.** The survey results show that over 85 percent of respondents experience moderate or high levels of hunger and food insecurity. Generalizing the characteristics of our sample to the broader low-income population in Oregon suggests considerable hunger and food insecurity among this population. In addition, 23 percent of all survey respondents reported that they cut the size of their children's meals in the last twelve months, suggesting that many families have progressed to severe stages of the “managed process” of hunger and food insecurity. In combination with the USDA findings, the reported increases from food banks statewide for food boxes, input from the state's social service agency leaders, and first-hand accounts from poor Oregon residents, the results of CPW's study are evidence of the substantial prevalence of hunger and food insecurity in the State.
- **Single mother households face the highest risk of hunger and food insecurity.** Not surprisingly, the survey analysis also found that single mothers are at relatively higher risk than other household types. CPW found that 30 percent of single mother

respondents fell into the high-risk category. This high risk can be attributed to the difficulties of finding and affording childcare. Lack of childcare limits the employment choices for women (and single fathers). It can also jeopardize their work status because of unexpected absences due to sick children. Single mothers also contend with erratic or nonexistent child support payments, shouldering nearly all of the financial and emotional burdens of raising children.

- **Hunger and food insecurity is prevalent across Oregon's geographic regions.** Hunger and food insecurity risk levels are relatively similar across the state, with the Willamette Valley region showing slightly higher levels of risk. Moreover, hunger is not solely an urban or rural occurrence. CPW found that people from different places often reported the same issues associated with accessing food and food assistance. Lack of mobility, finding and maintaining a job, and receiving assistance remains a challenge, whether a family lives in Portland or in Coos Bay.
- **A spectrum of factors contributes to a household's risk of hunger and food insecurity.** The focus groups identified many factors of a household's risk of hunger or food insecurity. CPW organized these factors into the following categories: access to services, income and cost of living, barriers to employment, transportation, and skills, knowledge, and values. Most of the factors point to large, systemic conditions that are difficult to solve in the existing political economy. The shortage of living wage jobs is a global issue that has local impact. Large corporations and small business owners alike are either unable or unwilling to raise the wages of their bottom-rung employees. Low education levels also are difficult to address when classroom sizes are growing and school districts' resources are limited by property tax measures. The lines between factors are often blurred and work together to aggravate a family's situation. Policy may be crafted that better recognizes the complexity of the hunger problem and understand the connections between factors that contribute to it.
- **Lack of transportation is a key barrier to a household's ability to be employed and to access food and social services.** A household's lack of mobility seriously threatens the food security of a household. As noted in Chapter Five, without the means to get to work, get to the grocery store, take the kids to childcare, and meet with your caseworker, a household's ability to provide for itself is severely limited. Public transportation is a necessary alternative, but has its own set of barriers, such as hours of service, frequency and location of routes, extra time required, and significantly reduced grocery-carrying capacity for riders.
- **Solving transportation issues is no easy task.** Transportation systems are very costly, and require a critical mass of people to make them viable public projects. Urban sprawl is exacerbating the problem and puts families without a car at a distinct disadvantage in terms of mobility. Sprawl also makes it extremely difficult for those unable to drive, like many elderly, disabled, and children to move about cities to get to all the places they need or want to go.
- **The Food Stamp Program is not effectively meeting the needs of the poor.** As a result of eligibility rule changes and economic growth, Food Stamp participation has fallen nationwide. This also is the case in Oregon, where program participation decreased by over 22 percent since 1995. Focus group participants cited several issues that make eligibility for Food Stamps difficult, including income and resource limits,

benefit levels, and complicated application procedures. In general, participants' felt that the result of these issues is that the program is eliminating many families that need the assistance the program is designed to provide.

- **Policy should involve comprehensive anti-poverty approaches that focus on hunger factors.** There is a clear connection between poverty and hunger and food insecurity. To eliminate hunger and food insecurity in the long term, public policy should focus on the root causes of the problem. The food assistance programs certainly help low-income families supplement individual household food budgets, however policy should take a broader approach that seeks to change the structural imbalances of the political and economic systems. Preemptive approaches can be successful in reducing the levels of risk low-income families experience, and put them on a forward moving track.

The Interagency Coordinating Council on Hunger, with its membership of State administrative agencies responsible for addressing this set of issues, can be the medium for this comprehensive policymaking. Understanding the connections between factors will help to develop integrated strategies across agencies that comprehensively address the problem of hunger and food insecurity in Oregon.

Final thoughts

Hunger and food insecurity are social issues that the nation needs to address, not just the state of Oregon. A cynical view is that hunger will never be eliminated, because of our accepted political and economic systems. Our economy emphasizes profit maximization over social equity, and as a result, some people gain and others are left behind. Many argue this is a “reality” of the system and that, overall, society is better off because the standard of living increases.

Clearly, effective and permanent solutions will require very difficult political decisions that represent significant departures from the status quo. One of the key pieces of this effort is to raise public consciousness of the issue. It is ironic that in times of economic prosperity, the public becomes relatively unaware of the problems of the least well off. Without a broad-based public mandate, the decision-makers may find it difficult to enact the reforms necessary to truly eliminate hunger from this country.

Appendix A: Survey Methods

Methodology

The purpose of the survey was to gather information from a low-income population that is at risk of food insecurity or hunger. Community Planning Workshop and Housing and Community Services chose participants of the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) as the survey population because LIEAP offered a convenient means to access a broad cross section of the low income population; a population that could be considered “hunger neutral” because they were not necessarily participating in food assistance programs. Households that earn 60 percent of the state median income (by household size) are eligible for energy assistance.

CPW developed a one-page, two-sided legal paper size survey consisting of 20 questions.⁹⁰ Time limits associated with the manner in which the survey was completed (LIEAP intake) dictated the number of questions. The question styles included both multiple choice and fill-in-the-blank formats, and were adapted from Oregon Food Bank Consumer Profile Survey instruments.

Since Oregon’s community action agencies (CAA) process LIEAP applicants, CPW partnered with them to administer the survey. Staff asked LIEAP clients to complete the survey at some point before, during, or after the intake appointment. In cases such that the LIEAP agency administered the program through the mail, the survey was sent with LIEAP materials.

To capture a distribution that resembled the relative number of LIEAP clients in the respective geographical regions of the state, CPW based allocation of the initial 3,000 surveys upon the percentage of the total number of LIEAP households each agency served. For example, since Multnomah County served 21 percent of Oregon’s LIEAP households, they received 21 percent of the surveys.

Survey administration proceeded from the February to May 2000. Table A-1 lists the participating CAAs, the number of surveys allocated to them, and the number completed. A total of 1,360 completed surveys were returned. Compromising the number of returned surveys was the timing of administration in relation to the peak activity in the LIEAP program. To capture a higher number of responses, agencies indicated that administration should have started in November or December 1999—however CPW and HCS had only commenced the study in mid-December. Low returns from certain agencies generally reflected already expended LIEAP dollars.

⁹⁰ Questions are numbered Q-1 to Q-21, however Q-13 is missing. CPW committed a proofreading error, when deleting Q-13 from the survey and not renumbering the existing questions.

Table A-1. Survey allocation and return by community action agency

Agency	% Share	# Allocated	# Returned
ACCESS (Medford)	5%	150	18
Community Action Organization of Washington Co.	4%	114	27
CAP of East Central Ore.	4%	120	47
Community Action Team (Columbia Co.	4%	130	90
Community Connections of NE Oregon	3%	89	84
Clackamas Co. Social Services	4%	132	57
Central Oregon Community Action Agency Network	5%	141	129
Community Services Consortium	9%	264	111
Harney Co. Senior Center	0%	11	0
Josephine Co.	4%	126	36
Klamath Basin Senior Center	4%	118	26
Lake County Senior Center	1%	16	0
Lane Co Human Services Commission	10%	294	224
Malheur Council on Aging	2%	46	0
Mid Columbia CAP	2%	68	31
Multnomah Co. Division of Family and Community Services	21%	617	157
Mid Willamette Valley Community Action	9%	268	153
SW Oregon Community Action	4%	112	25
Umpqua Community Action Network	4%	128	115
CAP of Yamhill Co.	2%	56	30
TOTALS	100%	3000	1360

Oregon Hunger and Food Security Survey

We need your help! The Oregon Department of Housing and Community Services is gathering information on hunger and food insecurity in Oregon. This survey asks a series of questions regarding your household and the availability of adequate food. Please spend a few minutes to complete the survey and return it to the caseworker. All responses will be kept strictly confidential.

Q-1 How often do you worry about where your next meal is coming from? **1348**

15.3% Never **25.4%** Rarely % Sometimes % Often **5.5%** Always

Q-2 In the last 12 months, how often did you (or other adult in your household) cut the size of meals or skip meals because there was not enough money for food? **1345**

31.7% Never 24.5% 1-3 15.8% 4-8 11.3% 9-12 **16.6%** 13 or more

Q-3 In the last 12 months, how often did you cut the size of your children's meals because there was not enough money for food? **1178**

77.2% Never 12.5% 1-3 4.6% 4-8 2.7% 9-12 **3.0%** 13 or more

Q-4a In the last 12 months, how often were the following statements true?

“We couldn’t afford to eat balanced meals.” **1324**

31% Never **49.8%** Sometimes 19.2% Often

Q-4b “The food that we bought just didn’t last, and we didn’t have enough money to get more.” **1308**

25.3% Never **50.8%** Sometimes 23.9% Often

Q-5 In the last 12 months, from which of these sources did you or a family member obtain food or food assistance? (*check all that apply*) **1233**

63.1% Food stamp benefits	1.9% Senior meal site	6.4% Home or community garden
23.0% WIC	14.2% Community basket	29.2% Relatives
28.1% School breakfast	2.9% Soup Kitchen	21.1% Friend or neighbor
36.5% School lunch	36.4% Food box program	1.1% Dumpster
6.0% Summer lunch program	1.3% Meals on Wheels	.4% Correctional institution
6.4% Day care meals	1.3% Meal from homeless shelter	
	4.1% Gleaning group	

Q-6 If you receive food stamps, how long do they usually *last?* (*check one only*) **776**
 7.6% They last all month 49.9% About 3 weeks 28.9% About 2 weeks 13.5% Less than 2 weeks

Next, we want to ask about services your household has used

Q-7 In the last 12 months, what types of assistance did you receive and in what months of the year? **1190**
 (check all that apply)

<u>Type of Assistance</u>	<u>Jan-March</u>	<u>April-June</u>	<u>July-Sept</u>	Oct-Dec
Food stamps	53.2%	38.5%	37.0%	42.8%
Energy assistance	26.8%	3.7%	1.0%	6.5%
Food Boxes	26.3%	15.5%	17.6%	25.3%
Social Security Income	18.4%	15.7%	15.7%	15.8%
Rental assistance	15.8%	11.3%	11.3%	13.3%
Oregon Health Plan	47.3%	37.5%	37.8%	40.1%
Other	5.7%	4.6%	4.3%	4.8%

Q-8 Which of the following led to you seeking energy assistance today? (*check all that apply*) **1287**

Welfare Benefit Changes

7.7% Cash assistance (TANF) reduced or discontinued How long ago? 4.29 mo.	17.1% Food stamps were reduced or discontinued How long ago? 4.5 mo.	2.8% Social Security was reduced or discontinued How long ago? 6.0 mo.
--	--	--

Cost of Living Issues

29.0% Unusual expenses recently	62.1% High fuel/heating costs	6.8% High child care costs
20.5% High rent	14.9% Health/medical costs	% Retired: fixed income is too low
% High mortgage payments		

Employment

40.8% Unemployed	35.8% Employed but wages are not enough	5.3% Seasonal worker
------------------	---	----------------------

Next, we would like to ask about your present housing

Q-9 What is your monthly rent or house payment? \$ 398.42 (mean) \$ 400 (median) 1137 responses

Q-10 How much do you spend each month on the following? **Mean** **Median**

Gas and electric 1263	\$ 110.18	\$100
Telephone 1144	\$ 46.99	\$40
Auto care (gas, insurance, maintenance) 1018	\$ 134.69	\$100
Other transportation costs 407	\$ 57.67	\$35
Child care 364	\$ 154.78	\$110
Health care (prescriptions, office visits, insurance) 590 responses	\$ 109.97	\$55.50

Next, we would like to ask about your income

Q-11 What other sources of income does your household receive? (*check all that apply*)

1160 responses

29.4% Full time employment	3.2% General assistance
19.5% Part time employment	.6% Alimony
7.3% Self-employment	10.1% Child support
3.9% Retirement or pension	.9% Worker's compensation or SAIF
9.3% Unemployment benefits	2.1% Student grants or work-study
20.1% Social Security or SSD	10.4% Family or friends' support
9.2% TANF- cash welfare for families	4.0% Other (church, Food Stamps, VA, Disability, WIC, miscellaneous)

Q-12 What is your household's current monthly income from all of the above sources?

1296

\$ 750 median

(Total Household Expenses (sum of Q-9 and Q-10= \$665 median)

Finally, please tell us about yourself and your household

Q-14 Please indicate your gender: **1305**

20% Male 80% Female

Q-15 What is your age? 1296, 39.81 mean

Q-16 Please indicate your ethnicity/race. (*check all that apply*) **1294**

3% Black	82% White
5% American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut	8% Hispanic
1% Asian or Pacific Islander	4% Other (Please specify)

Q-17 Which of the following describes your household? (*check one only*)

37.6% Single parent/female 16.4% Single/no children 8.5% Two adults/no children
4.9% Single parent/male 30.7% Two-parent household 1.9% Other _____

Q-18 Including yourself, how many persons in your household are:

Avg. household size = 2.89 mean, 3.00 median

under age 6? **592 persons**

between age 6 and 17? **659**

between age 18 and 44? **883**

between age 45 and 64? **375**

age 65 or over? **187**

Q-19 Do you think your household will be able to pay for what it needs 3 months from now? **1288**

32.8% Yes

12.4% No

54.7% Maybe

Q-20 Compared to last year, how would you consider your household? **1289**

18.3% Better off than last year

46.0% Worse off than last year

35.7% About the same

Q-21 If you could talk to the people who make the rules about food assistance programs, what would you tell them? Or what would you like to tell us?

748, 55% response rate to Q-21.

Categories: Gratitude, Positive Comments = 25%; Poor service = 3% ; Insufficient

Benefits = 21%; Eligibility Requirements too strict = 26%; Miscellaneous = 43%

Transcription of open-ended survey question, Q-21

- I think the help you provide is a great help, I have three small children, one that is 7 month sometimes I need help with baby food and cereal and diapers. Not a lot of help for little ones. Thank You.
- People should help more
- I would thank them for all of the help and hope that they bring people when they're having a hard time
- That I'm thankful for the help I receive and I appreciate it very much
- We have been grateful for the food Boxes. The Food Stamp people AFS should carefully consider the income and outgo before considering what an asset is (We had a trailer given to us that was being stored and couldn't sell, that got considered as an asset when it was a deficit.
- Not to be so stingy. That 4 cans of vegetables a month is not enough for one person let alone 4 persons who depend on food boxes. Thanks.
- Job training is the most important issue
- More sincere help
- Try and make it last straight it out
- I think its great that people get help at all.
- Thank you for the help.
- Please don't look at gross wages! We don't live on that!
- It helps a lot of people out!
- Great job
- That wages does not meet what the cost of living is
- Even at our income it is hard. \$1250 is not much to do things with or pay bills no extra for fun or car fix up \$86 in stamps is not enough.
- Thanks for all the help I have received. I would almost be lost without you. Thanks so much. God Bless you!
- Every little bit helps, and it is good to know there is a little help out there.
- Let people who are not on Cash Assistance and want to work get food stamps too. We are all low-income. I live on child support and SSI and food stamps. If I work I lose a lot of Gov. support
- I would like child support payments my husband pays to be considered. Such as when applying for food stamps etc., that amount to be deducted from our income so that we may be eligible for assistance.
- Make assistance an exception to some rules—I make \$10.15/hr. and have 2 teenagers—I am disabled and still work, however, I have out of pocket medical expenses of \$200 and it takes a big chunk out of other bills and food.
- Advertise, or somehow get the word out more. I didn't know you gave food boxes.
- That just because people go to work doesn't mean they should get cut off all assistance. It should be a gradual reduction.
- Food stamp program too strict
- Firm believer in systems that follow "WIC" guidelines
- I don't know we haven't used food assistance, or any other assistance, prior to requesting this heat assistance. We have gotten through by selling personal belongings, furniture, etc. and sometimes making partial payments for heat, phone and water bills
- Almost impossible to live on \$24.00 per month.
- Not limiting to help only one a month.
- People should have enough to eat healthy and assistance for toilet paper, bath soap, and laundry soap should be included and also toothpaste.
- I am not asking for help because I can. My divorce (in the works) makes it imperative that I get help until the state forces my husband to help take care of the kids. Please make it easier for us who are working full time but need assistance sometimes.
- It is a very low amount to survive on. I lost \$20 in benefits after my husband left and my ... went down to almost half.
- that even if you get \$300 a month in food stamps divide that by 30 you get 10 dollars a day to feed 4 people which averages out to be about .80 a meal for each person try to live on that assistance people.
- Seem to be doing okay.
- That they don't give me enough food stamps that they should give you so much each week.
- I wish that there was a little bit more to help with food stamps for those on a special diet. I'm diabetic.

- I'm thankful to have these programs. Wish I'd applied sooner. Perhaps info on these programs could be given to new customers (or was it??)
- Thanks for helping
- I'm glad there are food assistance boxes through 7th Day Adventist fo when we are very low on food for a few days-about every 2-6 months. I'm glad there is food through AFS to help assist our family each month.
- Usually people that sign up for assistance are low income, unemployed, unskilled, no transporatation etc. A person that works in this program has to remember that it may be a big effort for a client to make it to an appointmnet. By the time I got my turn
- I know nothing about the "rules about food assistance programs." A few months after my knee condition made me unable to work, I went to AFS in Madras to see if I could get food stamps—They did not even let me make an appointment to see anybody.
- No one person should have to try existing on \$500. Theres not enough money to pay rent and utilities Nothing for unexpected bills-car repairs No public transportation to get around without a car. Get stopped for no seat belt \$ have to pay fine of \$70
- To look at the family size and then decide on how much because for a family 5 we \$178 month and they think that last.
- As far as food stamps-please don't cut our benefits until we are steady. For two months I received 2 child support checks per month and now I only receive one and it is less than court ordered amount so support enforcement does not send "stub" because su
- Thank You all for your suport and helping me in my time of need god bless.
- I can't tell you what its going to be like I have to go day by day.
- I would ask them to reconsider the rules regarding students, also the rules regarding savings accounts IRA's ect. It is not good policy to deny assistance until somebody drains there life's savings. It certainly defeats the purpose of temporary needed assistance
- To allow a broader base for income for families to get food assistance.
- Considering the cost of living in Central Oregon the income limits are too low.
- Food stamps are not available for me until the 9th of each month – this is too long to wait. Fuel assistance has been and is a great program.
- I think its great that these assistances are here and available for those of us who need this kind of help. (thank you) Phillip Lake.
- Make the person feel as comfortable as you can. Some people feel bad about taking food from food banks.
- I would like to thank you for all your efforts & the good you do for others.
- Thank you for all your help!!
- That its harder for families to get everything they need to feed their children properly because the price of food is getting so high.
- Thanks for being there I don't know what I would do, and sometimes we need more than once a month.
- Families gross I would like to thank them for the help we got. We appreciate any amount that can help. Keep up the good work!! And also we hope someday we may be able to help. Thank you.
- ? never think of asking just listen and mostly be denied majority of applications. I need help!
- I don't need food but I have had back surgury am not able to baby sit for extra money since Aug. 9th. I can skimp by on food. I have car part \$169.75 so that takes a lot each month Also supplement insurance \$122.95 plus Insuraaance and taxes in my MH \$ Ca
- You Don't Want To Know!
- I think the set amount of income doesn't take into consideration health insurance and prescription cost- we are not going to be able to continue if we don't get help sometime.
- With the increase in all utilities, medical care & prescriptions as well as food, it's impossible to stay current for everything. I am diabetic and have been able to keep it under control with proper eating, medical care and medication-however with the co
We need a little more lead way for Food Stamps- kids need clothes-food-shoes-coats. By the time you pay the bills there is nothing left for nothing.
- I wouldn't say anything, They have helped me a lot.
- People that get only minimum age has harder time to keep up on the bills and food.
- We need more help with food.
- Its not fair that they judge you on your income when \$300-\$400 dollars is taken out for taxes. We have another child due next month and will be very, very poor, but we make just a little to much to get any help.

- Reason for needing assistance is that I was involved in domestically violent husband. He left due to warrant against him for domestic violence. Trouble making ends meet.
- Thankful for people that really needs help.
- I have gone, or my wife I should say, to two places 2x to community service for food. They were nice. One time about 2 years ago to food stamps the social workers were not nice at all.
- I think that the programs should stay open later at night because I'm busy during the day going to college.
- I think Central Oregon could use a food bank. If we need food on occasion by the time I get off work all help is closed.
- You should use our net income instead of our gross income
- Thank you for your help
- There is not enough food
- I think they should give more food stamp per person. Or change the rate on how much you make.
- I would like to see them make it on min. wage and very little food stamps they give.
- When looking at pay stubs look at the net amount and also other living expenses.
- Students, who also work part-time, should be eligible for food stamp benefits. Full-time workers with low income are eligible but, can be stagnant financially. Students are working hard to earn a better income but, are denied assistance besides their sacrifices.
- Thanks and probably have more food fund raiser in the community, and to bring the media in on it
- Consider it families situation individually
- Just thank you for the help
- Food stamp benefits never seem to last to the month's end—no matter how careful you are and sometimes food baskets don't include meat, which is needed in a complete meal.
- I need F.S. assistance but it is difficult to keep up with job search and keep you happy without transportation. So I don't apply for food stamps. Joel was very mean to me also. Pacific power ch# 1454 for \$53.59
- Joel Lusby is my AFS caseworker and he is great to work with. I was concerned about applying for assistance but he was so wonderful!
- People should be able to get food boxes more than once a month.
- Help those who are trying to get back on their feet again that have been through a divorce
- Thank you for finding food assistance programs. I would also like to thank you for treating me with dignity. My husband and I try not to ask for assistance, mostly out of embarrassment.
- I would tell them to actually take into account how much money a family actually spends on food in one month.
- I think if your income goes up a few dollars, like 10.00/20.00. Some times you might be over your income limit, to receive food stamps. And they drop your Food Stamp benefits completely. This can make it hard on a family that is used to receiving them.
- That 10.00 a month is no enough food money for one person on 786.00 a month income.
- What I make won't get me any help with food stamps.
- Even though our income goes up in the summer (not by much) we still have a hard time buying food because as soon as our income goes up, we are no longer able to receive Food Stamps. Which helps us tremendously!
- I know that if it would not been for food assistance—we would not have had food. I thank God for this program.
- They should look over their rules about how to help people they may make enough to pay their bills but don't make enough to live on, treat each case different
- The help of food stamps would be a good thing. Were seeing now if my mom can get them. No one has helped her.
- The food assistance programs are very helpful in time of need they are appropriate for all rules.
- I would start to see the food banks start the supplemental program back up for cheese, meats, etc.
- Thanks a lot it means a lot in our household. We are hardly making it by in the first place.
- Income variations do occur, beyond workers' control. Applying for assistance is asking for a helping hand, not forever, but until one is able to reciprocate the favor—3 months my case! I am trying to get full time work!
- People in the United States should not have to go to bed hungry—with Food Stamps it is hard to make nutritious meals
- That it's a shame how people who don't need help take advantage of the system

- I would dare any one of them to use \$800 and only 350.00 of food stamps and “survive,” for 2 months, for 5 people, a true test of whether he/she could manage it comfortably.
- When we got an emergency box: more food more variety, better quality—not dented cans or unsealed food, be nicer to people when they pick up a box once in a rare time, not look down at people or judge people or think if you get assistance you’re not as good as they are, I’ve worked at 19-20 companies I am now disabled
- No sodas, more good food
- The cost of food, the amount of food stamps does not meet family needs
- That we appreciate all your help
- Increase in food stamps Price of food high
- People often work hard but just don’t make enough—not all people who ask for help are lazy or “druggies”—treat people as you’d want to be treated if you’re in the same position
- Just because we gross a certain amount, we get cut off when in all reality we barely bring home enough money to pay rent. So the income guidelines suck we get penalized for having a job and making a certain amount on just paper
- Thank you for all the help and assistance being provided for our communities throughout
- Keep up the good work
- To have more places with help us and
- Thank you for your help!
- If obtaining food assistance was easier, people (adults and children) would not be going hungry!
- Thank you so much for your help.
- Not much
- More food stamps needed, cost of food to high
- Make the card so you can buy other things, such as toilet paper
- Please make allowance for mothers who have to provide packaged, processed food for their children’s lunches and other meals
- Those are great help to people in need!
- I need more food stamps to stretch through the month. I only get 262.00 for 3 of us! My children are 12 and 13—they are in a growth spurt!! They eat all the time!
- They are doing a good job
- Thank you,
- Those of us who are working to get an education to at least help out. My benefits went down or I completely lost some due to the fact that I’m going to school. At least give us a grace period.
- I think it’s a great program
- The amount is not enough
- not to go by a persons gross income and to consider the bills that people have to pay because my food stamps never last till the end of the month
- Teach people how to shop wisely. Prepare healthy meals, stretch their resource ie. Avoid fast food (Papa Murphy's etc.)
- Take into consideration if someone is trying to buy their home and mortgage payment.
- The only reason we are doing a little better is because we were allowed to get food stamps. Before this we didn't because my husband and I didn't have our final interview with Immigration and we had been warned not to get any government assistance .
- Thank you for your help.
- give more food stamps
- doing more community gardens
- give more help
- there's never enough
- I would like to get more food stamps and when we start doing better it would really help to have them a while so we could catch up and get paid up.
- could sure use some food stamps--make it easier for working poor people to get them please!
- Thank you. Its hard but it helps.
- Programs need to stay in place.
- don't penalize low-income parents who work by reducing FS benefits so there is never enough or any chance to get ahead.
- Not enough food stamps to last all month so we can buy balanced, healthy, quality food.

- don't lower food stamps. Give enough food stamps. Benefits given don't seem equal between working and disability.
- It seems the state doesn't encourage working single parents with incentives like more food stamps, gas checks etc. for people like me. You lose benefits when you start back to work which doesn't help single parent families.
- Feel I don't get enough help after I pay bills. There's none left, need more food stamps.
- That food stamps are to help people--not to continue to keep them in poverty.
- The program directors should try to feed a family on what food stamps and other programs are able to provide. The low amount per person is criminal
- I feel there should be an increase in the amount of benefits.
- Let working poor families keep food stamps while trying to get on feet.
- I was better off when we were on welfare--now that I'm back at work I lose a lot of benefits--find away to let people know we need more \$\$ for services--there's a backslide, I'm doing worse, am worried about getting sick and not getting enough help--my wife is ill and so I have more burden, I need child care help, more FS, etc.
- We're encouraged (forced) out of home to work then you take our food stamps away! We never can get even (forget ahead!). Although I'm grateful for any help it seems working single moms do worse than when they're on aid! Why is that? Why can't we get help for better education (=better jobs)??
- That they tell us to find work and when we do they take away the only way of eating that means no food stamp and no medical
- Glad it's here, it's a good thing, I try to get by without food stamps though, too much trouble to get.
- No food no medical
- Sometimes there isn't enough food; even though I get a lot of food stamps I wish our local food bank had more to help us.
- Please don't judge people
- AFS would rather repair a non-working car needed for work than let you have a decent reliable car I need for work; try to spend 2 weeks in my shoes working 2 jobs trying to take care of 3 children (my kids are disabled and I cannot afford proper care for them).
- For the people that really do try to support themselves, there is not enough support if unexpected things happen. You have to receive state aid/welfare-cash to get help with fixing say a car. Something wrong with that? Especially if an employed person needs the car to keep on receiving income to stay off welfare.
- Thank you very much but please consider the single person more (especially those who don't abuse the system). I only ask when I really need them and you make it hard--if I was working I wouldn't need them!
- It is unfortunate that working full time reduces food stamps so drastically that it almost isn't worth holding a job. No incentives for families trying to better themselves, it almost like being punished for working.
- Not enough help for working parents, not enough jobs either.
- Please make it simpler for people to obtain FS, a lot of working poor are too proud, the system makes it too prohibitive for a lot of people, they don't like the total invasion of privacy; just to pay the bills. There isn't enough money for food left so that a lot of people go hungry rather than go through the hassle!!
- I am grateful for what help I get. I didn't expect to get CHD but I did it has made things very stressful and hard. It would be nice if people could be more generous but we accept what we can get.
- They cut my food stamps now that I have a really hard time they are cut in half! It seems I get kicked when I'm down, doesn't make sense, there aren't enough jobs and we need a better support system and more jobs.
- It's a nice program to have and very helpful.
- Happy you're helping--don't know what I'd do without the FS.
- The JOBS Plus Program my husband was on for 6 mo of last year was a scam. The boss got 6,000.00 for whatever and he bought a new car while we were going to food boxes to eat. And never had a balanced diet because we lost our food stamps.
- Make it easier to obtain help--it's nice to get any but it's never enough.
- Working people need help as much as those that don't work (food prices keep going up too) There aren't food stamps given--they deduct every cent you make; my wages don't cover it all and then I get taxed on top of it, bust butt to make ends meet--have no butt left to bust! I work and never get ahead or enough help for single working poor, and certainly don't get enough food stamps.
- I hate having to go into welfare office--they make it so hard to get any help. It's easier to make it without their help--they don't give enough food stamps to make it worth it!

- I can't get food stamps because my only income is a rental house I own--I am disabled and trying for social security. I'm a college educated low income single parent--can't receive food stamps while there is so much government waste! What an injustice! You make it so hard.
- Your work is appreciated.
- We're on fixed income--wife disabled--can't make ends meet anymore--they say we're too rich for most services so we just do without! The food stamp program fails most people in my opinion.
- People who have no income and are homeless (regardless of whether they have children or not) should receive food stamps immediately and in return they can volunteer at least 1 hr at the office or other community service where they acquire some skill at being positive about their self.
- Thanks for the programs--however I feel it is an unfair thing to deduct food from families wages. If I work overtime to save up for a new car or couch, whatever, you take it back by reducing my food stamps. Also I would like to go back to school to get better wages but the system doesn't let you!
- My worker didn't help much when my twin babies were born--I went to work at (3 months old babies) minimum wage--AFS pays my child care--they pay more than I make for strangers to care for my kids--the babies are always sick--my FS get deducted and I am working, working, never to get ahead, no time for my children, you try to live like that! Its not easy to say the least. Welfare reform is a joke. Thanks for the little you do help.
- I know from volunteering that the community centers, churches, organizations do all they can to help those who need it with what they receive from donors, food drives etc. They are a God send. As for AFS my food stamps for 2 people last from the 6th month until about 15th. I don't spend excessively. Food costs so much \$. Cereal is outrageous! The whole welfare reform system sounds great by statistics but actually its pityfull. Good incentive Poor Program!
- Thank you.
- Your program is a good one.
- Inform you clients that you can have a decent car and receive FS, that you can work and still get some help. Need more incentives for working parents to keep off welfare--people get more help when on welfare!
- (Help) Let poor parents get an education so not to be stuck in minimum wage jobs--then we never get ahead--you take food stamps away when we can get extra hours--what's the point of that?
- We're on fixed income, husband disabled vet, hard to get transportation for workfare program (necessary for FS) I take care of my husband--would like to be exempt from forced workfare--any increase in income reduce your FS--when its very tight already.
- I would like to see the people who make decisions know the price of food these days; a lot of false (food price) advertising.
- Program is run poorly-I get \$48 a month--that's not enough or fair--why can't we get soup and T.P.--when people buy junk food we can't get necessities. I liked the old commodity program--then the parents are getting food and not using welfare for alcohol--parents need more FS to provide balanced meals.
- Get laxer on who gets them--don't be stingy--we're self employed and they say we're not eligible--our work is seasonal and they go on annual so several months (5 or 6 out of year) we have no money for food and we rely on food boxes (Community Sharing).
- Thank you for the help with my heating bills.
- I have never been successful in obtaining help (F.S.) because they said my car was worth too much! We try to manage without.
- You need to give more stamps, don't get enough for balanced meals and special needs meals. The stamps don't get me through the month--end of month never any left. Milk or fresh produce are not affordable--meats are a luxury!
- It's too much hassle for very little benefits so I just make do.
- Not to be so strict on people trying to get ahead.
- We need to have better medical assistance available to working family--we also need to help kids have food regardless--Consider more circumstances such as child support deductions, bills for "unnecessary items" like car insurance, etc.
- It seems inappropriate to me to have the level of income to be gross and not net due to that being the actual amount received to feed, house, clothe ourselves and our children.
- When we work (we always work) you deduct every extra hour I manage to get, there is never a chance to get ahead--we work more and just lose food stamps and have to use every cent for food--as a result it is always a struggle--we're forced to accept minimum wage jobs--that's not fair.
- Please offer more food stamps because food prices keep getting higher.

- Need to rearrange and be more flexible for income guidelines--people just barely over income are struggling just as hard as the rest of us.
- It's very hard for single parent to pay food, clothes, day care, etc. A better program for working single parents. I could use some FS, it would help a lot but you only offer \$10!!
- Please make it more available with income guidelines more generous--the system is too much of a hassle--its more important for me to stay home with my young children and struggle than deal with AFS, your requirements are too rigid.
- You need to look at how much housing costs and day care is. So costly I can't afford to work--take into consideration these things--also--people need a good car for work and AFS penalizes you--make people take U.A. to receive money (not food, but money!)
- I get penalized for working--teenagers eat more than normal. We could use some help.
- Should be more funding for food--our FS only last 2 weeks--we rob money from rent to pay for food and get behind on rent and utilities--sometimes working families need help to get thru bad times--we're not in a pattern of this--my husband and I both have had recent health issues. We usually both work to support family of five!!
- For small families your income limits are so low, we're very poor but unable to get help.
- We need more food stamps: growing kids need more food (I have teenagers). Don't believe you should have to be on job program to receive FS, most people are already looking for work--it discourages some people from applying for FS for their children. The kids suffer.
- You need to be more fair on self employed families--you don't deduct our deductions---taking gross is unrealistic--go by peoples net pay (what is actually received) not gross. Your system really hurts us!
- When you are on a fixed income and get a cost of living raise, your FS get cut--that's not fair--the food stamps are not enough to cover it--I'm worried about getting SS raise because then everything get affected--very unfair--raises mean nothing! I would like to see a fixed amt in FS not to be changed--you keep us at poverty level! P.S. How would you like to get a raise and have someone take your food away? Try to live on a fixed income (elderly disabled) with huge electric bill and get by on what help is offered? People look at you like you're dirty
- The income limit is ridiculous. I have been told that our family is ineligible for food stamps based solely on my gross income. My living expenses were not even considered. My son is trying to go to college but it's a struggle even with financial aid. We have had to skimp on meals many times and I have sometimes felt unhealthy due to the lack of balanced nutrition. I work full time, have worked at the same job for 9 years, rarely take days off, and yet I cannot make ends meet. Food is not scarce in this country and should be provided much more easily. And that is all I have asked for my family.
- More FS per person per month. Not lose benefits when employed. T.P. and laundry soap allowance.
- In summer my children are home and you deduct FS (winter heat?). My kids don't have enough to eat when they are home in summer, no school meals--I cannot earn any extra money (babysitting) or it's deducted--no way to make up the loss of FS money! The system doesn't encourage honesty. You get penalized for being honest!
- Rules are too strict--resource limits need to be higher--I get penalized--Why can't you have a little put away for a rainy day? I am ineligible because my car is too new but I have to have reliable transportation to work!
- Don't make it so difficult and allow people to have a decent car for necessary transportation to work! (reliable transportation!)
- Humiliation is the only action received from the state. Community programs are favorable and fair as part of the community/trustworthy!
- When I start back to work all the help stops--then I seem to be as bad off as when on aid but then I can't ever get ahead--sometimes wonder why bother?
- I live on SSI and support my daughter--we never have enough money or good food--she grows fast and I can't even keep her in clothes--please me more flexible!
- It seems inadequate and very prohibitive, am not comfortable asking for help--would rather work but jobs are not easy to find, (I have many skills) Now I'm 50 and I am unable to find a decent wage.
- We don't get FS, my husband was laid off (now back to work) and on unemployment--we have 3 kids--it was terrifying. You make it so hard (with all the job requirements etc) that we don't even want to deal with it!
- --I feel embarrassed to have to ask for this help but due to husband abandoning myself and kids, along with health issues it is much needed at this time and very much appreciated. Thank you.
- --That income fluctuates and the price of nutritious food has doubled. We can't buy meat (healthy meat) or fresh fruit and vegetables.
- --Not being able to buy so much junk food, be able to buy toilet tissue, toothpaste, etc.

- --I think there are they help a lot of people if it wasn't for us I don't know what I would do this month
- --Thank you for what you could and did give us
- --To consider all expenses in family costs
- We feel we don't get enough income from SSI for two adult people who are handicapped.
- The meals on wheels is very good--lovely people.
- Even though it doesn't apply to me I would urge food help to anyone who needs it--legal or illegal, alcoholic or not, dope addict or clean, male or female, and any color. Need, not politics, particularly in the case of immigrant children, should be the only factor.
- There's a certain level of stress in this life-style. So I haven't got enough time or patience to go and apply for food stamps. I seem to be always going to work. Plus, I had a car accident 12-20-98 and have been unable to drive to some places for help
- That many people, like me, need help. We are just barely making it. The cost of prescriptions and health insurance is why. Plus, everything else keeps going up.
- I enjoy receiving food boxes from the church. I receive child support only two little. My disability affects my life in a lot of ways. As I am getting by with rental assistance, and disability paychecks.
- I use my food stamp money to buy my basic, staple food such as flour, oil, dry beans etc. At my age that's how I learned to cook and eat. I might not want what I have to eat but I'm not hungry from lack of food. The later generations are not trained to spend and cook wisely. Hamburger can be cooked 100 ways. Who wants steak one day and nothing the next!
- I give thanks to all the assistance I receive, whether it's a little or more than I expected--Thank You--Sorry I can't be of any help as my Medicaid bills will be going higher.
- I'd like to say thank you for the help I get now. But I only wish it was a bit more to help with my medication. But I am very grateful for what help I do get.
- Help for electricity, rent, medicine
- Raise the level of income for people on SSD.
- please reach more children. Sometimes when I go for a food box (Church or Kendal Center) the people make me feel like a beggar. Thank you for this flyer.
- Allow families to buy the paper products and/or diapers etc. with food stamps, vs. prime ribs or lobster meat--perhaps the children would benefit more. I remember in the early 30's we could only buy staple items, no expensive cuts of meat also. Toilet tissue--a much needed item and soap or detergents for sanitary reasons. Thank you for reading this.
- Would it really make a difference on my ideas? Really hard to live on 563.00 a month. I pay my bills and I guess I should feel lucky.
- Food stamps was 108.00 now it is 45.00. Prices has gone up to much. I go to the store the first of the month and 45.00 is going fast. Have to ??? 30 to 40.00 away every month for ??? and gas.
- With the increased cost of food in today's economy food assistant should increase the amount. A person should always be able to buy meat and veges and fruit. They are so important to our health.
- Do the best you can--
- It is slim. My food stamp money is what I eat a month.
- I am legally blind and use a service dog. It costs 15.00 to 20.00 dollars a month to feed her. That cuts down on the food I could buy for myself.
- We use a lot of rice, Top Ramen, Pastas, Things that are filling. Beans. We buy our food to get the most for it. If we ever get food stamps we will use them wisely. They don't give you enough from what I have heard. Any amount we get will be used wisely for food only.
- Do more drug test. Don't stress disabled people.
- You are helping--but not enough. We are both Notch Babies--our Fed. Government is to blame for our plight! My husband spent 3 yrs. over-seas in Pacific Theater during WW2!
- Not enough Income to provide for myself.
- They cut back on food stamps. So we will have less money for bills and things and groceries.
- The public assistance rules are too strict. We don't qualify for food or Medicaid help and are barely making ends meet
- I want to thank them for their help.
- Money received can't buy meat (only noodles, rice)
- --I understand that there are a lot of people on the food stamp program, but I feel that they are doing more on not helping the ones who need help due to an income, and over helping others who are just too lazy or not caring about a job.

- --Help every one you can
- --To have 4 contacts a week for a job!
- --More helpful for people that don't usually use the programs
- --That people can't make it on their incomes and eat properly.
- --Give more attention to self-employed persons
- --You should have a confidentially run program by people outside of Vernonia so there isn't the social stigma attached to receiving help at Vernonia Cares
- --I think the programs are great with people who need it
- --Cost of living goes up but benefits don't
- --I think the food bank should give food once a week instead of once a month.
- --To go by a month to month income, not to say to a woman with 5 children That because you are in need but are were try to have a nice car you can get help even though you lost your job.
- --I think that the welfare is for people that use the system not for people that need it.
- --It's hard to find income in this town.
- --Qualifying for assistance is difficult
- --I think people in the U.S. need to worry about our own countries needs before other countries.
- --I just need food or help until my DAU or Social Security comes through
- --It seems that people that need a little help are unable to get it. The system seems to be set up for people that don't work.
- --I think America is very lucky to have such programs
- --We need higher income guidelines even though it looks like we make a lot of money on paper, we can't afford to live. We go without a lot because we can't afford health insurance or other stuff.
- --Thank you for being there for the help - Sara
- --Bring back the USDA cheese program
- --This is a great program for people in need
- --That people sometime people need a little help, even if it is for two months or so. I try to get help but because we are buy a car we are denied. That is not right.
- --That people shouldn't be able to buy chips and candy and soda instead of healthy food
- --Nothing
- --Thanks for all of your help!
- --Be more easy on working parents trying to make it
- --That they add dairy products (milk), less uncommon things like garbanzo beans, more common foods
- --I don't know
- --have a sliding scale for food stamps if you make a little over the limit, allow partial help with food stamps
- --I think its great, people reach out and care
- --I think its a great program it has helped me many times
- Sometimes people fall on hard times, not all the time do we have children. Sometimes singles need help also.
- nothing
- Need more fresh produce, which means more \$. Also essentials ie. TT, soap, shampoo, etc. should be covered.
- If you are really trying to look for work, a person should be able to get food stamps. Thank dad for dedication always.
- Thank you
- That guideline shouldn't be so much.
- nothing
- The food stamps don't last till the end of the month.
- I need food stamps- but it make too much money! It's not right.
- Supply information on who is eligible +income amounts
- make it easier to apply.
- am new to program.
- I'm glad there are are people out there to help the ones who need it.
- Simple people need assistance
- Students should qualify regardless of no work study.
- do try and feed a family themselves on what they allow especially growing children.

- guess they are doing a good job.
- Senior citizens do have special needs
- I think they have improved a lot in the last year, from what I've heard from other people
- Easier to apply, partial or temporary assistance for people who don't usually need help. Extra benefits for people with new babies.
- They cut my food stamps because the pay my rent we still have to eat and I can't buy food with money that goes to rent.
- Thank you
- Thank you it really helps
- Just that we are so thankful for the food assistance we do receive but that the challenge is to try to feed the kids nutritionally for the amount of assistance given.
- It is extremely frustrating that WIC does not allow for healthy alternatives (organic, etc.): the cereals offered are heavily processed with high degrees of preservatives, for example. Couldn't they implement a voucher system similar to food stamps where a maximum value is established for each category of food (cheese, milk, cereal, etc.) but participants could choose other brands, as long as the cost did not exceed the maximum values. We don't use half of the items in WIC because we feel the options available (particularly cereal) are too unhealthy. Is Oregon the only state that does not allow organic food?
- Those working minimum wage job with children should receive food stamps for children
- Our AFS system needs overhauled. They force you to be non-working to get assistance. If you have any income even if it isn't enough to make ends meet. Partial assistance would give people the ability to get back on their feet instead of permanently dependent
- More food to last through month
- Get benefits twice a month, ½ on 1st, ½ on 15th
- Quality nutritious school lunches are important
- There is so much waste of healthy foods—bring the prices down so all could afford to buy.
- That food stamps should be increased so balanced meals were able all month
- More availability for milk and bread
- Not a whole lot
- That people need help so make it easier to help them
- To let jobs plus people keep their food stamps
- Jobs plus people should be able to keep getting food stamps
- Income needs to be higher. Cause your money goes towards bills more than anything.
- In the past you helped a lot. Thanks. I think you doing OK
- Not to have us recertify as often because of time lost on job and the time it takes to fill out paper work.
- They are doing OK
- To allow more \$ food stamps for those with children between 10-18
- Relax the guidelines—count net income because of child support, different taxes, etc..
- We need more food than one every three months
- Would it be possible to put together an information packet that would inform us of the assistance that is available all at one time so we could receive help sooner?
- The eligibility guidelines are too low, and so are the benefit amounts.
- Food stamps should go up enough so a family has enough to eat all month, not just most of the month.
- So many people don't drink powder milk, should give out gallon of milk/ family
- People who are doing jobs plus program should receive food stamps!
- Stop letting children go hungry.
- If you get help from one you can't get help with someone else.
- People really appreciate them!
- Listen to the People And Care of the Real needs of our People.
- Thank you for helping me.
- workers are too indifferent. Government also
- Listen to Common people
- Just make it easier and less shameful to receive help
- They wouldn't listen-or care. They don't understand.
- people working full time (single parenting) need more assistance-- people need to listen
- You either give way too much or not enough, You should also give part of the month for necessities like toilet paper and soap stuff.

- That poor people need to have proper nutrition just like anyone else! That maybe the government should negotiate a percentage discount for food stamp use with the corporate grocers; food prices are high and they are still getting most of the gain from food stamp increase
- You take a family of five and try to feed them on \$150 and see what you come up with. It doesn't work Maybe ½ the month at best.
- Not enough also some times hard to deal with
- That foodstamps do not last the entire month
- I think that more support should be provided for students. When people are trying to better themselves through education that should be supported and encouraged.
- don't penalize people who are trying to better themselves and increase their childcare co-pay because they are make more money or more hours..... don't cut off or decrease food stamps because you make more money or more hours.
- Need more food to last all month.
- Not sure yet. But with the help I'm going to get this program is great!! Thank you.
- Thank you for all your help without your help it would be much harder. Thanks
- Income guidelines need to increase to match cost of living. Children only would receive they are undocumented
- Income guidelines too low –aren't able to meet household needs on single income. Apply for test and can only get help for child –one don't have documents.
- Try to improve
- To consider bills
- Benefits need to be available for more than 3 months. I work for the school dist. On call in and often I don't earn \$412 a month I'm dead in the water after 3 months and I'm sure I not the only one out there who needs to have more chances to help myself. Sometimes Its very hard to earn enough just to stay afloat. Thank you for listening
- I would tell them that they should give out more vegi's and fruit. And say thank you for what help I have gotten from them.
- I think it is very adequate and helpful
- I think its fine
- To help seniors who can't work and the money doesn't cover their monthly bills from their monthly income.
- Make sure humans are the beneficiaries of the program not pets.
- Couldn't survive without food stamps and an occasional food box.
- fine job keep it up
- It really helps
- I think they should offer nutrition classes, help show us how to use our food stamps so that they last all month.
- We are lucky to have it
- That she would really need the help
- Consider more and help out more people can not make it on what is given
- I just think filling out the monthly reports are fusterating but I don't mind it to much.
- Get better food, don't make it so hard to get
- Change car penalty
- Thanks
- piden mucho requisitos (they ask for a lot of requirements)
- que no pongan tantos requisitos para alludar a la gente (they shouldn't have so many requirements for helping the people)
- pienso que el valor de un vehiculo no deberia importar para poder ayudar a alguien que necesita tener comida para sus hijos (I think that the value of a vehicle shouldn't matter to be able to help someone that needs to have food for his/her children)
- que me dan asistencia cuando la necesite (that they give me help when I need it)
- pueden ser mas flexibles con las estampillas de comida (they can be more flexible with the food stamps)
- creo que el programa de estampillas de comida nos alluda mucho es bueno (I believe that the food stamp program helps us a lot-- es bueno)
- cut cost
- your not realistic to your qualifications to the programs
- when on a jobs plus job, if eligible for food stamps, we should be able to get them

- Revise rules/update. Try to take each household case by case. Not everyone is trying to use the system. Possibly in making each person or family more responsible for information in proving situation, a "grey" area could be used. Grey in the sense, when a household is a few dollars over income, why some type of compromise
- That just because you make 5 or 10 dollars over the standard limit does not mean you will be able to buy food for the whole month!
- They need to raise food stamps allotment for single parents with small children
- That people would not be there begging for food if they had it
- Too many penalties
- School lunch programs are poor quality
- Income level should be more/higher. Value of car higher
- Don't know much but I do know a lot of people are abusing the system
- Not enough food-- the more I make the less I get.
- que aumentan la cantidad de estampillas de comida y a asistencia mou??? (they should increase the amount of food stamps and assistance m?)
- I need my car and am afraid its worth more than the food stamp program alouse. It's a family van and it broke down. I still would need help
- I think you people for all your help and I know you would help me more when I need you.
- They help people that are trying better themselves then not home watching TV
- We live on the income after taxes. When you take gross income, that doesn't make sence. If you can't feed your family. Something has got to wait, then there isn't any way to catch back up. Insurance should count, because it is the law that you have to have it.
- Raise income level so it can benefit more people
- Thank You
- They work well
- Food stamp program works well for me and have gotten food boxes when it was necessary
- I think the food assistance programs are a great help to families in need
- Thank you
- Well when you can actually qualify for them there awesome to have. But they are hard to get.
- To offer milk and cheese
- I would say today the programs are very fair and a big help for the needy
- Don't reduce food stamps for families with children because they received more cash. The cash helps provide housing, clothing, diapers, and utility costs
- You do great
- I think it's a very good program
- Lots of hungry people out there. The service is great. Thank you. Bless you.
- Send out flyers on food box days
- Thank you- only happens to me in case of emergency- loss of income- so thank you very much
- Nothing is black and white, not all people fit in the system. Some are on the edges.
- Do complete invesigations too many people getting ass. That don't need it.
- Nothing. Its just a blessing to have help
- Thank you and keep up the good work
- They need to understand that we don't live off gross and it is hard for a family with one income to survive. We have a 3 yrs. Old and a new baby on the way so the guidelines need to be looked at again
- It would to hard to put in words
- The two parent households that are trying to make it don't get from the a.f.s. but people that live off the system do great
- lower income guidelines making it more accessible to get.
- Tell the Government there are people from here that are getting from 0-1/2 of what people get that come into this country
- provide when requested ladgitanty
- Your doing a great job appreciate the help!!
- You all do a very good job helping people who need it.
- I appreciate the help
- I wish it was possible to use net income instead of gross. I also wish you took in consideration if a person has to pay for their childrens insurance premiums

- Thank you
- need to give more
- Need food boxes more often. Thank you for the assistance you have given
- Food costs more in some areas than others. I live in a higher cost of living area so a food dollar doesn't go as far. It is a shame when you are \$30 over the amount to qualify for food stamps when there is no where to go for help
- Thank you
- They need to provide a "phase in" program where people who accept employment are not cut-off from all assistance immediately but rather "phased out" of the system
- food stamps need to be more helpful to those who need help. They go by gross so we make too much
- make it a little easier for people who are trying.
- I would suggest that if someone has children-- and can show financial need that should be the only requirement for obtaining help.
- Give more
- I have a hard time providing personal hygiene items razor blades, etc.
- Try going on the stamps yourself
- I have appreciated the help I received.
- Thanks for the little help you have gave me.
- Do not count u/e benefits dollar for dollar--just because taxes aren't subtracted monthly--one still must prepare monthly for tax time. Eliminate pop, candy, coffee from list available on food stamps (benefits) so more could be applied towards nutritional food. Thanks.
- I think its important that they include toilet paper/dishwashing liquid. Sometimes its impossible to make ends meet if you go to laundrymat and have outside expenses.
- It's a great service.
- A little more assistance in moneys for rent, taxi for distance appointments.
- Food assistance is good.
- That its wonderful you guys are willing to help the people who need the assistance.
- We do not get enough food stamps to eat for a month. Not even close to enough!
- You are doing a good job.
- When SS gives their people a raise every year then, the landlord raises the rent, and other business people raise their prices, we who are on SS go deeper in the hole. Then I find out I'm only entitled to \$10.00 a month in food stamps. It just doesn't make sense.
- I think people on medical diets should have their stamps increased. No sugar and no saturated fats and no red meat is mine and some of those products are high. That I can have.
- The amount of food assistance is adequate enough to carry us through the month, However not enough for fresh produce.
- Our money is gone long before the month is.
- Keep helping people.
- That they don't treat us like people they treat us like objects and they are very condescending and shaming because we are in need. Some of thme are not gentle or patient at all and seem very burnt out and angry.
- Thank you for making it available--appreciated.
- I would change nothing, "programs" are "excellent" for those of us who are in need.
- Lift your limits a little more.
- When you have no car you can't get around to do what has to be done to get assistance.
- The Food assistance program is necessary for all people whether they have children or not.
- The rules should be the same for everyone. The people at Oakridge Food room take what they want/ fix big boxes for friends and give out what is left
- a lot of people need help and I'm glad that we have a food assistance programs. Or we would be in a lot of trouble. Not only adults would starve so would children.
- The people in different households should not have to claim the same income from child support that comes in if the child is living with another person.
- They need to lower the requirements for assistances. We make five dollars too much
- I know we are not supposed to eat high on the hog on food stamps but \$86.00 in food stamps doesn't begin to buy enough good food even with sales and coupons. Politicians need to do some shopping on these budget (\$86.00 food stamps + \$55.00 cash) I rarely get to buy needed clothes or shoes unless I do without something else. If my car breaks down, I'm out of luck. I can't work.

- They should consider how hard it is to feed 2 boys and 1 diabetic mother also why cut food stamp back when kids are out of school during the summer-kids eat more because they are home.
- To give out more food stamps, me I live on \$36.00 for food for one month. Yet they give a male that can work 85.00 in food stamp why?
- Very helpful couldn't get by without it. Also help I get for my medicaid+medicin+medicare.
- Seniors on SS need more food stamp benefits \$10.00 a month isn't much at all. Needs to be looked at more thoroughly.
- Dot No
- That if you are going to school or trying to better yourself you should be able to get food stamps just as much as someone who does nothing.
- I appreciate what help I get? I get \$10 per mo. Cash assistance plus I am on the Oregon health plan
- Lower income restrictions for seniors!
- I would say, very gratefull for having Fd, Stamps, and the convients of options. For those of us- Seniors and limmited too Grocery Stores (in miles) often must pay more of our Fd St. because of prices + often during Winter mo. deduct some \$ amts.for fuel pmts "Thank you" for concern + in caring.
- I have had 4 strokes I could not work even if I wanted to. My husband has only one hand and is 73-how can we get along if not for your help?
- We need more Food Stamps
- I think is a good program but feel some try to take advantage of a good think-
- Food Stamp Regulations should be set according to each case, regardless of income.
- I'm very grateful to the people who came up with this gracious idea for individual and families which means a great deal for survival . They Good bless them for that.
- More meat, Daily(?), fruit.
- The age of the children should be taken into consideration. A 15 year old boy eats much much more than a 5 year old boy
- nothing, at this time. They seem to be doing just fine in Helping this Community
- Everyone tells us
- More granola bars (easy to store). More juice. More fresh vegetables (often half-spoiled).
- I have 2 boys that stay with me 3 days out of the Week! Because their father has custody I can't claim them on assistance--this I feel is unfair because they are growing kids and eat a lot of food. I fell like there should be some way to get assistance for them.
- I'm satisfied.
- Help all the people that needs the help for food.
- They need to increase dollar amounts
- People with fixed incomes such as social security are not able to keep up with the cost of food. Those that receive food stamps can buy very little food.
- Take a survey of poor people's food needs!
- We all can do better, if we really try, and not for profit.
- That they should not go by gross income, they should go by net. Net is what you take home to pay bill and food costs.
- Help!!
- Allow more for baby food (very expensive).
- Food prices are higher--Food stamp allotments are lower--try living on \$47 a month.
- More money to pay bills or help with car insurance and more food stamps. Run out before next time that get.
- That they should make sure that people use their benefits for taking care of their children.
- Make it easier for people to get the assistance that is needed, e.g. vehicles.
- Thank you for your help.
- Thank you for your help.
- Special senior needs.
- Thank you very very much for the help. God bless you!
- Where a change in household in come gets better, it is hard to keep up as benefits go down and the ? stays the same--it's hard to get ahead.
- Thank you very much.
- The cost of living-gas, electric is rising faster than any food stamp, SSI benefits. There is not any money to get ahead.

- It would help if they deducted the amount owed from the value of a vehicle when qualifying for food stamp assistance.
- That I think that you should start helping the people who are trying to help themselves instead of ones doing nothing.
- To be able to get food stamps once in a while when they would be needed.
- Don't put people down for needing help. If they are over by \$1.00 you need to help them. They would be there if they didn't need them.
- Background and application forms should be checked more effectively. Too many people are taking advantage of system. When there's those who are in need, system makes it difficult to get assistance. When in time of need.
- As simply as possible? Make it available to anyone who needs it.
- More assistance to people who go out and try to find work and prove it- Not just for anyone who comes for help.
- How come you go by gross? Nobody ever has the gross amount to pay their bills on earth.
- Start a coupon service
- I would ask to give more for bigger family size.
- Nothing
- Just what you gross isn't what you bring home. They count money that doesn't come into the home.
- That child support should be a deduction, for assistance, when the court is taking it out of your check.
- Can you find or get me a job here.
- Thank you
- I appreciate all of the work you do to help us. I wish income from children still in high school was counted differently though-my son's part-time income makes us too "rich" but I don't feel it's his "job" to pay for family bills and I "let" him keep his money for his own use.
- Should be allowed to receive a food box more than 3 times a year from food bank.
- Be willing to retrain people so they can get jobs that actually support them. Especially consider testing/retraining those who haven't worked in conventional jobs for a few years.
- When SS has increase for cost of living, decrease same amount on Food Stamps. Don't deduct \$20.00 when you receive 6.00 increase on SS.
- Food assistance program needs to take in account allowance for mortgage payment-cost for food for people on special diets. Example a diabetic.
- Changes have been good to a point. Case workers need to work on case by case, people's situations are different. Look at the whole picture. Don't put everybody in the same box! or category.
- If you didn't need it and can get by with out help for food Don't apply for assistance. I'm 84 years old + haven't yet asked for help with Food Assistance Program. If you can get by with out help, Then don't use the program.
- More assistance for Food Stamp. Help with covering Prescriptions, Cost. Allowance For mortgage payment. Only receives \$60-in Food Stamps. Will not allow mortgage payment as a deduction, to help with more Food Assistance.
- Would like to have Food Stamp available on the date they are supposed to be available.
- That some people need meat in their food boxes.
- I would have to see the rules to evaluate.
- No Comment-
- On AFS food stamp program I feel very little assistance is given on (food stamps)
- The income levels need to be higher.
- To take into consideration of working people. The money that they do have all goes to bills and maybe just be a little more lenient on the amount given each month with the monthly change reports.
- Thank you for your help. We needed help and we got it
- I've been grateful for the assistance during my financial struggle of late but when you are trying to get on your feet having dollars taken away for every dollar you earn seems pointless.
- Thank you very much. I really appreciate this so much.
- Please increase the FS we don't buy junk food and they still don't last -raise amt, so we can have protein, meat, good balanced meals throughout the month, our child gets all- we sacrifice our own food for our son.
- Be more flexible
- We are new in Oregon- housing is high, wages are low services aren't enough that are offered, when you begun work all help stops! Please let us get on our feet - then take everything away.

- Encourage gardening , healthy food, vegetarian, organic
- I have cancer, can only work part time so its hard to get by for me-Please make it easier to obtain help
- More people should be eligible-when working families get penalized, their FS get deducted and you can not get ahead. The more money you make the less FS you stay the same there's no reward for working more
- Please give more benefits- they just don't last- all my bills are high- there's nothing left for food
- I work part time+ get c. support - you deduct each dollar, I have 2 boys they eat a lot I skip meals so they can eat. By the end of the month we hardly have any food
- lower limits- not penalize because employed
- you tell us we make too much for FS or OHP- We pay \$600 a mo. For medical insurance! Our 4 kids eat a lot and we never get any help
- some people need additional help, especially at the end of month
- I would just like to say thanks for any help you can give me.
- I believe normally where you live if you need help you should be able to receive it.
- Please treat people as people not numbers raise income guidelines for elderly and families - treat people with dignity.
- this 45 day wait for money , you need money way before 45 days. You have the most stupid rules. When people are finally getting their lives together you cut them off. We need more job training
- Need to be more lenient on rules and regulation - income guidelines need to be more flexible Calif. Is wonderful in their assistance program
- Considering I have no children at my age cash assistance should apply to help get back on my feet and some kind of work study program so I don't fall through the cracks of society , at least I don't have to raise any children in the future while being on the service once I'm set on a secure job
- You don't give benefit to last the month (based on income)
- I need more help with milk, soup, and other food for my children
- Please make it easier to obtain - when families need them they should be made available.
- you cut me off FS when I got a job+ its harder to live rural - need better transportation for work
- I don't have any problems- some people do have problems getting them when they need help
- Do not abuse the system
- try to live like we have to for 1 month , see how it is to worry about bills & where the next hot meal is coming from for your children
- Please help those with kids (& seniors)- they really need the food - adults can squeeze by
- Open your eyes- think of children 1st- don't take out parents problem out on the children- they need to eat!!
- help with monetary assist for couples without children
- It's hard to afford fresh fruits etc (nutritious food) on monthly FS, I can only provide basic food - not fresh healthy food - please allow more benefits , when you try+ work hard They take away your food and that makes it even harder! I'm pregnant and can't eat right , my doctor is angry because I've lost weight I'm shaky + hungry + being forced to work!
- Please consider gross is not what we receive- Don't reduce FS during summer when kids are home eating. Our costs go up not down monthly income limits need to be higher, my boys are teenagers + they eat a lot
- Keep up the good work
- I could use some help
- food costs a lot more than you think.
- I like the card (less abuse) Need to increase especially w/ teens Possibly allow House Hold ITEMS such as toilet paper + laundry soap ect.
- Every dollar counts, I wouldn't use the program if I could get a job that payed more than \$7.00 an hour
- Because we have no kids hardly anyone will help us. Childless people are people too!!!!
- I'd like to tell them thanks for food assistance when needed. One thing is we're proud to be living in a better environment and place now, that we were before. I'd appreciate very much for the assistance when we are all need.
- No matter the income-let there be food so the family can live in peace.
- The state seems to penalize if one is educated. It is easier for a state to get help than someone who has been responsible!
- It will be nice to have little more food stamps every month
- Keep up the good work
- I'm poor need help
- 375 is not enough for 3 people for an entire month of food it takes about 150.00 a week

- I don't know
- To at least give enough to help feed throughout the month
- They are doing a good job. We are overwhelmed with food most of the time
- That they need to allow more food stamps for low income families, because food may last 2 to 3 weeks
- Sometimes middle income families fall on hard times but still make too much to qualify
- I am out of food usually by the third week of each month
- We are grateful for help-- we have feelings, too-- sometimes we are scared and worried-- mutual respect is a worthy goal-- Thank you too!
- Thank you
- Food cost are extremely high these days, especially for diabetics. Can't afford very much
- Thank you
- Need more locations, open more days, longer hours
- You try to survive on \$127 per month
- The working poor are not making it on \$6.50 or \$7.50 an hour. We need help. Please do not treat us like criminals. Thank you.
- These programs are very helpful. I very much appreciate your help. I think these programs should be more available.
- Thank you
- Loosen rules about food vs other household items-- all are needed. [food can't be used to buy toilet paper, soap, etc.]
- none at this time
- Thank you
- There are some of us who work very hard and sometimes emergency occur and electric and food are hard to purchase
- Maybe to longer the benefits and increase as long as the person is trying to be successful in becoming self-sufficient
- Lets see you buy a months worth of food for 108.00 and live off that all month
- I think the card program for Food Stamps is good- it keeps people from abusing the system (selling foodstamps) (I think), and its not so degrading as standing in line with your children and counting coupons out of a book in front of everyone. I think more often than needed I've applied for foodstamps because I don't want my kids to be embarrassed (I would rather skip my meals, or just eat bread)
- Could they treat people nicer, respect would be nice!
- more help/ higher guidelines
- Raise gross income level, for the OHP and Food Stamps. Thank you for the help that was available
- Have a way of truly assessing a households goods and income-- visual verification of a home etc. I don't know
- Have not applied till later today
- Would like to include vitamins (childrens) as elibigle on food stamps
- The sick and poor in this country are looked down upon by state and federal government. I used to be a tax payer and workers, now that I have a liver disease, I am looked down upon
- Poverty index is messed up. 9.00 an hour can not support a family
- Thank you for your help. Today and forever
- The amount is not enough
- Don't count what we make before taxes. I very hard to keep food for your children when you don't get much money
- Treat me as the person I am because sometimes I need help but when people make me feel there are paying out of their own pocket I walk away and won't ask for the help
- You are not being fair to us mothers who work ful time and we can barely afford to pay all the bills
- That even parents that work can't meet their living cost, nevertheless safe for a home, car or clothes for either the parents and children. Its sad to work so hard and never be able to accomplish anything but to survive
- That it is a long process and when I've tried I have felt belittled by workers there. We don't qualify most of the time cause we are a few dollars over that's is. I don't work all year either
- Thank you
- Thank you for all your help
- for WIC they need to let more varieties into their program

- Give us milk and cheese and butter
- I would like to have more food stamps than just \$10.00 would help out
- Take one month at a time
- That people need fresh vegetables and milk, cereal and more nutritious meal oriented foods stail bread and potatoes are not very appitizing most usually go hungry even if they do get food assistance
- nothing
- When considering income-- consider only take home as taxes are automatic deductions
- Tad more food stamps a month
- it helps
- To get on Food distributors to put nutrition back in food and lower the prices of food, food assistance does a good job
- no opinion
- having a good job
- Please increase food stamp assistance
- needs to be changed
- That students and families should get assistance regardless of savings
- This month I got \$181 in fs compared to 330 last mo. Which would be ok except I'm still trying to get my bills caught up. I know my husband's pay check every week is "already spent"
- I am very grateful to get this help
- The food stamps are just not enough, we have to eat what will go far, I feel I have to beg for food from my community just to live. I do what \$ have to for my kids
- Before the social security check arrives food supply is depleted-- especially fresh produce
- I'd like to know how they would handle eating on that amount for a month
- The income levels need changed according to the current standards and costs of living. Not all of us are out to abuse the system
- Feed the children
- That it does not pay to have a job, because you cannot survive and raise children on a minimum wage job
- That the foodstamps given are just not enough to last through the month. And to keep a balanced diet for a year old child gets expensive
- Better left unsaid
- You don't want to know-- the different programs have messed my life us so much!
- To not put me in a box (of age- ethnicity/race)
- Thanks for this program
- I need help
- I would like to have more food stamps. I could use more food and it gets so expensive
- Personalize rather than generalize
- Make it easier for people to get on just food stamp
- People getting jobs and who end there benefits need time before all benefits are cut off other wise you stay below the poverty level because you never have a chance to get caught up w/ expenses-- (Extend benefits for longer after people get work and cont. childcare and insurance benefits
- Continue to assist those in need as required. Thank you
- Thank you without these programs we would not eat.
- We can feed the hungry at home before going abroad
- Hungry people dont act smart or make good judgements because they cant think so its best to feed them and then help them look after themselves. Kids develop best of fed well
- Try not to make people especially the elders self conscious about asking for assistance when needed
- The assistance is too minimal. Frugal goes only so far.
- Make more benefits available
- Theres no reason people should go without food or shelter
- To be cut off when you make only \$700.00 is disastrous, there is no follow up job program that a joke! I've been working temporary and that wreaks hell-- there has got to be help for people under-employed! Your income guidelines are chokingly low even on food stamps we had to use food baskets. We desperately need fresh food not another jar of peanut butter
- Quit listening to people who makes 40-60 thousand dollar and listen to people who makes 4-6 thousand a year. Put all politicians on a welfare budget for three months and see what they say.
- What happened?

- Make it easier make it a tiered program to ease off instead of dropping a person immediately after employment.
- They are very helpful
- This program is a great help for those that don't like to ask for help.
- The food stamps don't last long enough for most people getting them is too difficult
- Treat with more respect and caring. Let people keep their dignity despite circumstances
- That I appreciate the help but sometimes they make it too hard to get temporary help. Sometimes they make you wait till you have nothing
- I would like to tell them to keep up with the higher cost of food and the cost of living.
- I think that there should be more foodstamps. Just because you get rent lower you still have the rest of the bills you need to pay its either disconnects or food
- That they're doing good.
- They need more one on one evaluations per family
- That they shouldn't wait until people lose everything before they will help.
- That there are still many out there who still good without / there should be other ways and answers for why hunger is still out there. Some people can't get in to see people for help-- there are still those who no nothing about assistances offered.
- Keep it coming
- A little more would be nice. Because it seems like every time I go to the store everything cost a little more.
- For one thing, you go by gross amount rather than net. We do not take home the gross.
- More meals programs for homeless and unemployed
- I think that everyone come to a point in there life when they need help. It is nice to know you can apply to get that help. Thanks
- They should not discriminate people's eligibility for public programs on basis of having/ not having citizenship
- That sometimes I might need help
- That other people need more food stamps than others
- I guess just to say thank you for your assistants in providing food stamps and other resources to us for food like school breakfast and lunches, are also great.
- I don't feel the gross income should be amount you have to claim, But the net income should be the amount have to claim.
- That poor people need more food stamps
- Thank you very much for their help.
- I see so much waste when it comes to food--most times it's too hard to contact the right program for help-- most don't know how they can obtain assistance. Not too many radio, TV, or newspaper exposure.
- Let mother care for children and make fathers pay for child support.
- Women need more help than what can be offered by the state--at times of emergency crisis, but not to become dependent upon or abuse the system.
- I only make 50 cents over minimum wage and I don't qualify for food stamps and I don't understand why.
- I prefer the coupons. It is easier to divide them from one date to the next.
- Get a better reality check on balancing out monthly living costs, family size, and higher paying jobs.
- I am at a loss. Questions like these irritate me.
- That we need more help in Summer than winter.
- Get more information.
- People like myself need more help than what is offered out there.
- That everything they do I really would like to say thank you and I appreciate it all
- Offer assistance to pregnant females, single mothers, older people.
- Thanks for the help.
- Total responses
- Thank you
- Needs to be more available.
- Raise food and financial help to survive
- Once I knew where to look for assistance. I found a lot of options available for the most part--luckily I had a phone.
- Just help. People need help.

- Just because people needs help doesn't mean that they are uneducation, and things come up whre they need help.
- Give neough food stamps to last for a whole month.
- You can't eat a car and yet a car is counted as a resource for food stamp benefits!! How crazy is this?!
- I have gotten a food referral once, but I had no problems, and thank God for these resources.
- Once someone gets employed don't just cut off their food stamps one month after unemployment. Let them have at least 3 months to catch up on bills before they have to start worrying about how they're going to eat.
- I would tell them that they should help out more with working single parent households because they are struggling to house, feed, and cloth they're family's.
- I think it is pretty good now.
- Need more food stamp. Need more job opportunity.
- Keep up the good work!
- The ocst of food has sky-rocketed. Programs should be comensurate of the price of groceries or one cannot eat healthily at all.
- Thank you for all the help given.
- Help!!
- The places I found that could give you food, the food was moldy, it would be better if I could get more food stamps a month.
- More help.
- Need to increase food stamps.
- That I appreciate all the help I am getting.
- My own food situation is OK but single mothers and others have real trouble.
- I would like to have an increase on food stamps. I'm tired of struggling. Somde days I have nothing to eat.
- I think they are doing the best they can with the source of money they get.
- Thank you.
- I think it is going OK but the cash assistance programs is not too helpful, you need to have to much information.
- I really wish they would reinstate the cheese--govt cheese like the old days and I wish we could get balanced meals through the food boxes--tho I appreciate them no matter what.
- Thank God for people who care enough to help, when help is needed.
- They need to look at total expenses not just how much you make especially if you totally rely on single incomes.
- Easier to obtain, better availability.
- Sometimes its not enough food.
- Not everything applies to all. Each have special circumstances for needing help. Some need it more frequently, others may just need assistance during a rough time.
- I would say people need more stamps and they should allow exltra for people who have special needs such as diabetes.
- Give food stamps and don't cut them off every three months. Make special provisions for disabled people.
- Make sure they need help the poele who need help, stay on everyone who applies for assistance make sure there are more jobs for those who actually want to work.
- Some people go all over and get food when they don't really need and some people need food and they can't get it.
- To be more aware some people spend more on medical bills and prescriptions.
- Need more food stamps.
- To make it easier to access.
- The income levels should change for people with kids to get better services. Food stamps, child care ass., medical ass.
- Don't be so sight on the food. People may not have any money or their situation you may be able to understand.
- I have no complaints, since living in Portland I've received food assistance and it was very appreciated. Keep up the good work !!!
- I would tell them there doing a good job in assisting people in the help that they need.
- I would say people are grateful to have a community nice that help people in need.
- Not enough money in food stamps to last.

- Thank You.
- In most programs they make you wait to long between help.
- Well to help people with food and say thank you to you guys to do a good job helping people.
- I need food stamps so I can feed my family. Was turned down because my car is too new (98).
- I have never received help from one, but I think it is great that people are out there doing what they can to help people in need.
- Keep the programs available, because there's always a need for them.
- I think everyone should be helped out with food assistance when need.
- Response rate (746/1360)

Appendix B: Focus Groups

Methodology

Community Planning Workshop facilitated ten focus group discussions – five with low-income participants and five with social-service professionals and community leaders – across the state of Oregon. The low-income focus group discussions provided participants the opportunity to describe the barriers they experience in obtaining adequate nutrition for themselves and their families. Discussions with the social-service professionals were designed to uncover potential community level and state level strategies to reduce hunger. To capture a broad cross section of the Oregon population, the focus groups were conducted in Portland, Salem, Bend, Pendleton, and Coos Bay. In total, 48 low-income and 52 social service participants attended the meetings.

CPW targeted 8 to 15 participants for each meeting. This size is considered ideal for establishing comfort and rapport with participants. CPW recruited participants with the help of contacts at various community action agencies. For the client focus groups, CPW and community contacts targeted clients of social service programs. Agency personnel were identified with the help of the community contact or other personal contacts of the CPW team. CPW wanted representatives from a cross section of the social service agencies, including Head Start, WIC, AFS, local health agencies, food banks, and others.

The focus groups consisted of eight to nine core questions from which the discussion revolved around. The topics included: factors contributing to hunger or food insecurity, community food resources, the emergency food system, food stamps, welfare reform, and local and state level solutions. Facilitators asked follow-up questions to clarify or elaborate on comments.

CPW used slightly different language in the questions for the client focus groups and agency personnel focus groups. In addition, after agency focus group meeting in Portland, CPW refined the process to become more effective. The refinements included breaking the eight questions into two sections, the second section involving small groups of 3 to 4 persons brainstorming potential solution ideas and then presenting them to the full group.

To record the participants' responses, CPW recorded responses on flip charts visible to the audience. In addition, other team members took detailed notes, capturing quotes and emotional quality of statements. CPW also recorded the meetings on audiotapes to serve as backup to the flip chart and individual notes.

Characteristics of Focus Group Respondents

This section describes the characteristics of low-income focus group participants. CPW asked participants to complete the same survey administered to LIEAP participants at the beginning of the meeting. Thirty-one of 48 focus group participants completed the survey.

Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics

Household Type

Among the 31 participants in our low-income focus groups who completed the survey there were 29 females and two males. Table 4-13 shows that a very high percentage of these women were single mothers.

Table B-1: Household Type of Focus Group Participants

Household Type	Number	Percent
Single Parent Female	24	77%
Single No Kids	4	13%
Two Parent Household	2	6%
Other	1	3%

Age Group

Table 4-17 shows the distribution of the focus group participants by age group. The median age for this group was 32.8, which is seven years younger than the median age for the survey respondents. Ages ranged from 17 to 58 years. Overall, 28 of 31 respondents were in the range of 17 to 44 years of age.

Table B-2: Age Breakdown of Focus Group Participants

Age Group	Number	Percent
17 to 24	7	23%
25 to 34	9	30%
35 to 44	12	40%
45 to 54	1	3%
55 to 64	1	3%
65+	0	0%

Ethnicity

The majority of our focus group participants were white, as was true of the overall survey population. However, there was a greater representation from minorities in the focus

groups than in the survey. This was especially true for African Americans, all of whom were at the Portland meeting, and Native Americans. The exception was the Hispanic population, which was better represented in the survey (although this would have been the reverse if the survey was administered to the Spanish speaking focus group participants).

Table B-3: Ethnicity of Focus Group Participants

Ethnicity	Number	Percent
White	19	61%
African American	5	16%
Hispanic	1	3%
Native American	4	13%
Multi	2	6%

Employment Status

Table 4-19 presents the distribution of employment status. The rate of unemployment is greater than in the survey population, while the percentage of full time workers is smaller and the percentage of part time workers is similar.

Table B-4: Employment Status of Focus Group Participants

Employment Status	Number	Percent
Unemployed	15	48%
Full Time	7	23%
Part Time	6	19%
Seasonal	1	3%
Retired	2	6%

Income

The median monthly income for the focus group participants was \$665, with a mean of \$789. The median is nearly identical the survey population, while the mean income is slightly greater.

Food Security Status

Table 4-20 illustrates that the focus group participants are in a substantially worse situation than the respondents from the survey population. In fact, the 3 percent in the low risk category and 55 percent in high risk is much more dramatic than the results for any of the subgroups analyzed from our survey population.

Table B-5: Risk levels of Focus Group respondents versus Survey respondents

Respondents	Low Risk	Medium Risk	High Risk
Survey	11%	78.4%	10.6%
Focus Groups	3% (1 person)	42% (13 people)	55% (17 people)

Use of Food Assistance System

Table 4-21 shows that the focus group participants utilized most of these sources of food assistance at greater levels than did the survey respondents. This may be a reflection of the fact that a greater percentage of the focus group people were single mothers and/or unemployed. These results provide perspective to the food insecurity risk findings for the focus group participants in Table 4-20, because it is clear that a high percentage of them are experiencing high levels of food insecurity despite the fact that they are utilizing numerous forms of food assistance.

Table B-6: Sources of Food Assistance

Program	Focus Groups	Survey
Food Stamps	81%	63%
Friends, relatives, or neighbors	52%	38%
School Lunch	61%	37%
Food Box Program	42%	36%
School Breakfast	52%	28%
WIC	42%	23%
Community Basket	32%	14%
Home or community garden	3%	6%
Summer Lunch	10%	6%
Soup kitchen or homeless shelter	0%	4%
Gleaning group	0%	4%
Meals on Wheels	6%	1%

Focus group questions

Client

What are the factors that you think contribute to hunger in Bend?

How do you get food for the people in your household?

- A. What community resources do you use if/when you need food assistance?
- B. Are there specific programs that you use to feed your children?
- C. Are there other programs that you would like to see in your community?

If you use the emergency food system (food boxes, soup kitchens) does it meet your needs?

In your opinion, what works or does not work about the current Food Stamp program? If you're not receiving food stamps, is there a reason why not?

How has welfare reform impacted hunger and food insecurity in your community?

How hard is it to get and keep a job here? What are the barriers to employment for you and/or people in your community?

What ideas do you have that would help people in your community to get enough food to avoid going hungry?

What do you think the policy makers should do so that everyone can put enough food on the table? What would you like to tell them

Agency personnel

Hunger in the Community:

What are the factors that you think contribute to hunger in your community?

Community Food Resources:

What are the primary food assistance resources in your community/area?

Emergency Food System:

In your opinion, what should be the role of the emergency food system?

Food Stamps:

What works or does not work about the current Food Stamp program in your community?

Welfare Reform:

How has welfare reform impacted hunger and food insecurity in your community?

Short-Term Solutions:

What specific ideas do you have to reduce and/or prevent hunger today in your community?

Long-term Solutions:

In what ways can the root causes or contributing factors of hunger be addressed in your community?

Policy:

Is there anything else you would like to tell state level policy makers?

Full list of hunger and food insecurity factors

Factor One: Access to Services

Factor sub-categories:

Lack of information/awareness about resources

AFS concerns

--complicated application process

--low benefit levels

--strict eligibility requirements

--poor accessibility (hrs, transportation)

--poor perception

--customer service

Issues with Emergency Food

--limited facilities

--strict eligibility requirements

--poor accessibility (hrs, transportation)

--limited availability

--church related issues

Pride, Stigma, Shame

Hispanic Issues

--language barrier

--fear of immigration/deportation

--discrimination

General access issues

--mentally ill

--disabled

--elderly

--transportation

--grocery store and relief program locations

School Meal Issues

--timing

--quality

Factor Two: Cost of Living

Factor sub-categories:

Food (in general)

Food (special needs)

Housing

Lack of affordable housing

Medical costs

Lack of medical care

Child-care

Child support

Low wage jobs

- mostly service sector
- agricultural jobs
- Unemployment or underemployment
- Seniors on fixed incomes
- Poverty (levels/methods for calculation)
- Priorities and Values
- Lack of cooking/food storage facilities

Factor Three: Barriers to Employment

Factor sub-categories:

- Child-care
 - cost
 - availability (hrs)
 - quality
- Drug and alcohol addiction
- Lack of education
 - school drop-out rate
 - no skills
 - illiteracy
- Disability
- Domestic violence
- Mental health issues
- Teen pregnancy
- Homelessness
- Discrimination
 - Hispanic
 - reverse (Pendleton area)
- Language barrier
 - Hispanic
 - reverse
- Legal status

Factor Four: Transportation

Factor sub-categories:

- Lack of public transportation
- Limited hours
- Access issues
 - grocery store
 - job
 - hunger relief program
- Ownership cost
- Effects on benefits levels (food stamps, TANF)

Factor Five: Skills, Knowledge, and Values

Factor sub-categories:

Lack of education and knowledge

--cooking

--meal planning

Lack of nutrition programs

Lack of community education and awareness re: hunger

Lack of community awareness and concern

Other Factors

Impact of state capital

Fatigue

Dependency upon outside food sources (Bend)

Equity in state funding for social services

--“Equity in funding-census is ten years old-area is under funded” (B2)

--“Other counties (compared to Multnomah County) have less resources (P2)

Full list of local and state level solution ideas

Table B-1: Solution coding

Location	Client	Agency personnel
Portland	P1	P2
Bend	B1	B2
Pendleton	Pe1	Pe2
Coos Bay	C1	C2
Salem	S1	S2

Factor One: Access to Services

- Let us keep our food stamps when we get work (Pe1)
- Look at the needs of an individual family, not just the income (Pe1)
- Expand and improve emergency food system (Pe1)
- Better facilities/funding for food banks so they can get more USDA commodities (Pe1)
- SHARE program - you pay \$15 and help box food and then you get \$80 worth of food (Pe1)
- More USDA commodities, meat, fruit and dairy products (Pe1)
- More appropriate food for kids (food boxes) (Pe1)
- More community and not church based programs (B1)
- Food-buying cooperative (B1)
- Adopt-a-family program (year-round, not just holiday baskets) (B1)
- Resource list should be provided at AFS office (B1)
- AFS should refer clients to all eligible services (B1, P1)
- Need transition period from welfare to work—benefits stop too abruptly (B1, P1)
- Client info needs to be shared between agencies to make it easier for clients to get the services they need (B1)
- Give clear information about who does what at the agency—make it easy to know who to call (B1)
- Increased agency coordination/networking(B1)
- Agency hotline - 1-800 number (B1)
- One-stop shopping (B1)
- Weekend hours at social service agencies (B1)
- Include clients and low-income people in planning (B1)
- Let us shop for what is available in terms of programs (B1)
- Match programs to individual needs (B1)
- Be able to buy food stamps (P1)
- Change the way benefits are determined (P1)
- Increase benefits (P1)
- Provide a sleeve for the Oregon Trail Card to avoid de-magnetization (C1)
- Make it easier to get benefits (C1)
- Allow people receiving benefits to get their child-support payments (C1)
- People with older kids that cannot receive WIC should be able to get more food stamps because teenagers eat more than babies (C1)

Give benefit payments twice per month (C1)
 More resource information in Spanish (S1)
 More money food bank--Governor should support OFB getting new facility (Pe2)
 Eliminate such a rigorous system and guidelines on citizenship status. If you have the need you should be provided for, legal immigrants have food security issues just like citizens (Pe2)
 More USDA food for food banks (Pe2)
 Anonymous free and reduced lunch in schools (Pe2)
 Free breakfast for all students (Pe2)
 More efficiency among providers and services--more partnering/coordination locally (Pe2)
 Prevent duplication of services, pull dollars and resources together to provide more essential services (Pe2)
 Have a widely available list of resources (Pe2)
 Community support for food banks (free advertising, publicity, PSAs) (Pe2)
 Increased links between Extension Service and AFS (Pe2)
 Increased identification of communities with high incidence of hunger (Pe2)
 Food Stamp/EBT cards at the farmer's market (B2)
 Mandatory nutrition class linked with Food Stamps (B2)
 Vitamin and mineral supplements as an addendum to Food Stamps (B2)
 Same day access to Food Stamps, especially expedited Food Stamps (B2)
 Increase cash assistance for TANF recipients (B2)
 Expand General Assistance program to serve more people (B2)
 Increase access hours to emergency food pantries (B2)
 Increased public education/outreach about resources (B2)
 Change eligibility requirements/limits for programs (B2)
 Full funding and consistency in WIC program and childcare services (P2, S2)
 Need a centralized database of resources (P2)
 Incentives for stores to accept Oregon Trail Card (P2)
 Raise the allotment for Food Stamps (P2)
 More individualized Food Stamp services—take into account ages of children (P2)
 Simplify verification process (P2)
 VISTA participants to help fill out food stamp forms (P2)
 Better identification of resources within the community—figure out assets, overlaps and gaps (P2)
 More demonstration projects to test bright ideas (P2)
 Higher reimbursement rate for school meal programs (collect data for months other than October) (P2)
 Extend service delivery hours (C2)
 We need ample warehouse for food bank food storage, especially perishables (C2)
 Free school breakfast and lunch should be available to all kids in the county (C2)
 Make it possible for parents to join their children for school breakfast (C2)
 Streamline local referral systems (C2)
 State should follow Coos Bay's lead and integrate case management (C2)
 Experiment with disposing of all forms, and application requirements for a set amount of time and just feed the people...see what happens (C2)
 Emergency food providers should receive on-going sensitivity training (C2)
 Improve communication between food providers (C2)
 Should be a gleaners program in every community (C2)
 Create equitable distribution of food throughout the state (C2)

Food bank should not have any limits on how much and when it can provide food to a family (resource constraints) (C2)
Improve advertising to increase awareness of qualification requirements for services (C2)
Teachers should be educated on how to look for signs of hungry children (C2)
Increase coordination among emergency food providers and the state (C2)
All agencies and emergency food providers should have access to the state database (shared intake form)—integrate electronic systems across state (C2)
Should be state subsidized and community supported truck that distributes food to rural communities (C2)
Do not cut AFS staff or service delivery will go down the toilet (C2)
Expanded Federal food and nutrition programs (S2)
Increased outreach about Federal food and nutrition programs (S2)
More Federal and state dollars for food programs (S2)
Providing information about services in client appropriate ways (i.e. TV/radio) (S2)

Factor Two: Cost of Living

More low-income housing and state-funded housing (Pe1)
More free after-school programs for people who cannot afford child-care (Pe1)
Increase amount of education people can receive with welfare's help (B1)
Make it beneficial to work hard and get to the middle stage when you can step up (B1)
Get rid of the \$1 for \$1 disincentive – “the more you work the less you make” (B1)
Low-cost affordable food stores in neighborhoods (P1)
Community fun grocery stores (P1)
Food sharing among moms in the community (P1)
Community kitchens - where families rotate and cook meals for the neighborhood (P1)
Parent community co-op (P1)
Change rules for child support (P1)
Vouchers for other household items like toilet paper, diapers, etc. (C1)
The state should create more high wage jobs (C1)
Need medical insurance (immigrants) (S1)
Support more affordable housing (affordable at the local level) (Pe2)
Increased medical support for seniors, children on medication and for prevention (Pe2)
Community gardens at housing sites (Pe2)
Make co-pay for ERDC more reasonable for people on low wages (Pe2)
Offer incentives for businesses to provide or fund child-care (Pe2)
Offer small-businesses help to pay for full-time workers (benefits, social security) (Pe2)
Increased dollars for Habitat for Humanity and Section 8 housing (Pe2)
Help small businesses so that they don't need to just hire part-time or temporary (Pe2)
Establish skills exchange and/or barter system (Pe2)
Maintain medical insurance when people get jobs (Pe2)
Home in exchange for helping to build it and gardening (Pe2)
Lower co-pay for ERDC—increase payments to child-care providers (B2)
No state, county, or local dollars (loans, grants, tax incentives) to businesses that primarily create low-wage jobs (B2)
Develop more family wage industry (B2)
More city/county involvement in affordable housing (B2)
Need more affordable housing (B2)
Need livable wages (B2)

More funding for low-income housing (P2)
State needs to address the gap between benefits and self-sufficiency wage (C2)
State needs to provide more money for childcare (Reedsport program example) (C2)
Create more economic development/family wage jobs (C2)
Establish living wage ordinance (S2)
Establish tenant owned housing cooperatives (S2)
More support for unions to support living wages and benefits (S2)

Factor Three: Barriers to Employment

Domestic violence services in rural areas (Pe1)
Make classes more accessible - child-care and evening and weekend classes (Pe1)
There should be non-mandatory classes that teach you how to budget (C1)
Work-related on-site child care (S1)
Low-cost child-care (S1)
More job opportunities for women, especially Latina (S1)
Less strict guidelines to obtain legal status (S1)
More education programs - job training, English, driver's education (S1)
Increase vocational training on the local level (Pe2)
Provide increased educational opportunities so that people can end up with higher paying job (Pe2)
Work with the drug problem (Pe2)
More money for homeless shelters (Pe2)
Increased education for increased self-sufficiency (Pe2)
Support educational role of extension service in the community (Pe2)
Offer incentives to banks to make small business loans in rural areas (increase outreach to public, increase small business lending) (Pe2)
Provide a "retention specialist" to work with employers and employees to maintain their jobs and improve their skills/success (Pe2)
Increase state funding for alcohol, drug, and mental health treatment programs (B2)
Decrease high school drop-out rate (B2)
Make sure that people are getting a high school diploma to get basic skills (B2)
Reduce teen pregnancy (B2)
Need long and short term strategies to help people keep and get better jobs (P2)
More basic skill training—literacy, budgeting, shopping, food prep) (C2)
Determine how to adequately pay child-care providers, but also keep affordable (S2)
Establish local education access point to teach basic skills (S2)
Need adequate and appropriate support for education (S2)

Factor Four: Transportation

Public transportation system (B1, Pe1)
Increased access to cars and transportation (S1)
More Driver's Ed classes (Spanish) (S1)
Offer tax incentives (state) for businesses to provide transportation (Pe2)
Make more usage of school buses incl. public transportation (Pe2)
Recognize that transportation is a necessity (Pe2)
Fund Bend transportation grant given to state to provide inter-city public transit (B2)
Need for public transportation (B2)

Expand hours of operation of public transportation system (C2)
Improve access to affordable shopping within the city and in the rural areas (C2)
Expand public transportation to include a Sunday bus (S2)

Factor Five: Skills, Knowledge and Values

Connecting seniors with youth to mentor around issues of food preparation and budgeting (Pe2)
Bring EFNEP Program to Bend area (B2)
Offer more nutrition and cooking skill classes (B2)
Establish community dinners to bring people together to cook (B2)
Establish food recovery and gleaning programs –get high school students involved (B2)
Establish community gardens (B2)
Bring home economics back to the schools (C2)
Expand EFNEP into Salem area (S2)
Increase responsibility for neighbors (S2)

Increasing Community Awareness Solutions

Hold community dialogues to identify information gaps (CADO is currently bringing together CADO, AFS and the food banks) (S2)
Engage City Manager's and City of Salem Social Services in dialogue about hunger (S2)
Develop local grocery store point of sale donations to hunger programs (B2)
Build community support networks through community dinners, Spanish dinners, etc. (S2)
Bring together clients and volunteers to increase equality (S2)
Community awareness and outreach campaign (B1, S2)
Need for more public awareness (PSAs) on “giving” to local food pantries and hunger causes (Pe2)
Bring private sector to the table (Pe2)
Increased support for local anti-hunger task forces (i.e. Bend) (B2)
Get more of greater community involved (P2)

Other Solutions

Prioritize volunteer needs as a community (S2)
Form a local council of all of the agencies who work with hunger. Someone should govern the council from outside the agencies. (C2)
Emphasize collaboration and partnership (S2)
Improved communication between state and service providers (Pe2)
Get education department more involved with hunger issues, especially of young children (Pe2)
Provide local discretionary funds to deal with local issues, individual needs (Pe2)
Increased local hunger data collection—will help communities focus on unique problems (Pe2)
Involve higher education with food banks—do research in a “hands-on” way
Consider the metro/non-metro differences (Pe2)
Ensure that we are reaching everybody who needs to be reached (Pe2)
Get ODE more involved with hunger and kids (Pe2)

Make people aware that hunger is tied to a wide array of factors (Pe2)
State could organize community meetings to generate solutions, utilize resources better—state could hire a community social service planner for each region (Pe2)
Equity in distribution of service dollars (B2)
Share percentage of gambling and liquor profits with the social services (B2)
More local data about hunger issues—USDA and OFB data broken down by region (B2)
State should update numbers and accurately assess the need in an area (B2)
Every ICCH member should walk in the shoes of a low-income person for a month (B2)
Don't bury us and our clients in paperwork (B2)
Reform welfare reform—shift focus to reducing the number of people in poverty (B2)
Take a deeper look at poverty (root causes) (B2)
We need to go to policy makers and say we don't want to keep tinkering with the band-aids—we need to get at the real problems like income or employment (P2)
Need to bring Portland, the county and the state to the table (P2)
Institute a system to gather information on various sub-populations to allow for better decisions (C2)
State should do exploratory look at the emergency food system—resources too scarce on local level to do this(C2)
We need to identify the underlining issues and have a better understanding of why clients are accessing services (C2)
Use available information to better serve and educate consumers—this would need to begin at the state legislature (C2)
DHS should take a lead role in integrating and coordinating services and providers (C2)
Institute more front-end planning—state should be proactive rather than reactive (C2)
ICCH needs to ensure communication between state agencies that serve the same client base – link computer systems (S2)
Less stringent and more cooperative relations between nonprofits and USDA (S2)
Asset building in community to get at what is working and what is needed (Search Institute model from Minnesota) (S2)
Look at international examples and other innovative models (S2)
Constantly need to create legislative goals—Poverty in Oregon - A Call to Action Conference in Eugene October 2000 will establish collaborative poverty agenda for the 2001 legislature (S2)
Get back to the basic issue of poor nutrition and hunger as a health issue for all income levels (S2)
Bring back nutrition education for all income levels - involve OSU Extension with social service agencies and schools (S2)
Complex problem in need of complex solutions (S2)
Front-end preventive funding rather than just funding problems - Head Start example (S2)
Recognize the cost of incarceration per person vs. education and other services (S2)
Policymakers should find out if the USDA hunger and food insecurity study findings were correct (S2)

Appendix C: References

Chapter Two

Carlson, Steven J., Margaret S. Andrews, and Gary W. Bickel. 1999. "Measuring Food Insecurity and Hunger in the United States: Development of a National Benchmark Measure and Prevalence Estimates." Journal of Nutrition. American Society for Nutritional Sciences.

Citizens' Board of Inquiry. 1968. Hunger, U.S.A: A Report by the Citizens' Board of Inquiry into Hunger and Malnutrition in the United States. Boston: Beacon Press.

Congressional Quarterly Almanac, Volume 16, 1985.

Eisinger, Peter K. 1998. Toward an End to Hunger in America. Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press.

Galer-Uniti, Regina. 1995. Hunger and Food Assistance Policy In the United States. New York and London: Garland.

Leachman, Micheal. 1999. How Many Hungry Oregonians? Measuring Food Insecurity and Hunger. Oregon Center for Public Policy: <http://www.ocpp.org>.

National Center for Health Statistics. 1996. Plan and Operation of the Third National Health and Nutrition Examination, 1988-94. U.S. Government Printing Office.

Poppendieck, Janet. 1994. "Hunger and Public Action: A Social Problems Perspective" Food Security in the United States: A Guidebook for Public Issues Education. Cooperative Extension System.

Physician Task Force on Hunger in America. 1985. Hunger in America: The Growing Epidemic. Middleton, Connecticut: Wesleyan Press.

U.S. Department of Agriculture. 1999. Measuring Food Security in the United States: Prevalence of Food Insecurity and Hunger by State, 1996-1998. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

U.S. Department of Agriculture. 1997. Household Food Security in the United States in 1995. Summary Report.

Voichick, Jane, Linda T. Drake. 1994. "Major Stages of U.S. Food and Nutrition Policy Development Related to Food Security." Food Security in the United States: A Guidebook for Public Issues Education. Cooperative Extension System.

Wehler, Cheryl A., Richard Ira Scott, Jennifer J. Anderson. January/February Supplement 1992. "The Community Childhood Hunger Identification Project: A Model of Domestic Hunger—Demonstration Project in Seattle, Washington." Journal of Nutrition Education, Vol. 24, No.1.

Chapter Three

General Accounting Office, United States. 1999. Food Stamp Program: Various Factors Have Led to Declining Participation.

Gundersen, Craig, Michael Leblanc, and Betsey Kuhn. 1999. The Changing Food Assistance Landscape: The Food Stamp Program in a Post-Welfare Reform Environment. Economic Research Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Oregon Food Bank. 1999. 1999 Hunger Relief Statistics for Oregon and Clark County Washington. As a handout to Interagency Coordinating Council on Hunger, November 1999.

USDA Food Recovery and Gleaning Initiative, United States Department of Agriculture. 1999. A Citizen's Guide to Food Recovery.

Chapter Four

Nord, Mark, Kyle Jemison, and Gary Bickel. 1999. "Measuring Food Security in the United States: Prevalence of Food Insecurity and Hunger by State, 1996-1998." Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.