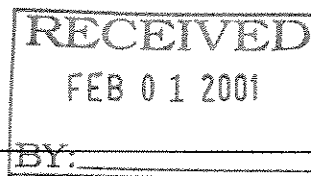


State of Wisconsin
Department of Health and Family Services

Tommy G. Thompson, Governor
Joe Leean, Secretary



January 26, 2001

Mr. Donald Schneider
Senate Chief Clerk
1 East Main Street – Room 402
Madison WI 53707-7882

Dear Mr. Schneider:

Pursuant to s.46.76(4), the Department of Health and Family Services is required to develop an annual plan that documents areas of hunger and populations experiencing hunger within this state and to recommend strategies for state and federal policy changes to address hunger in these areas. The statute further indicates that this plan be submitted by December 31, annually to the Governor, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the appropriate standing committees under s.13.172(3).

The enclosed State of Hunger and Food Security in Wisconsin, Annual Report for 2000 is being submitted to you in accordance with this requirement. Please contact my office if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Joe Leean
Secretary

Enclosure: State of Hunger and Food Security in Wisconsin Annual Report

**THE STATE OF HUNGER AND FOOD
SECURITY
IN WISCONSIN**

Annual Report - December 2000

Prepared by the Wisconsin Food Security Consortium for the
Department of Health and Family Services

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OVERVIEW

Pursuant to s.46.76 (4), the Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS) is required to develop an annual plan that documents areas of hunger and populations experiencing hunger within this state and to recommend strategies for state and federal policy changes to address hunger in these areas. The statute further indicates that this plan be submitted by December 31 annually, to the Governor, Superintendent of Public Instruction and the appropriate standing committees under s.13.172 (3). The material submitted within this report serves to meet this requirement. It has been prepared by the Wisconsin Food Security Consortium - a recently formed partnership of 20 government, business, community and university representatives that serve in an advisory capacity to the Department of Health and Family Services. The Consortium is seeking to catalyze new public/private partnerships and will utilize findings from the report to guide development of a statewide strategic plan to make measurable improvements in food security for low-income families.

The Food Security Consortium was formed in May 2000, by the Department of Health and Family Services and Miller Brewing, Inc., in response to a recommendation from the Wisconsin Board on Hunger before it was dissolved in July 1998. The Board recommended that a public/private advisory council on hunger prevention be formed to (1) collect and review data about the incidence of food insecurity; (2) make recommendations about ways to solve problems; (3) identify concerns about hunger and useful approaches to hunger prevention in different parts of the state; (4) provide technical assistance and information about available grants and programs; and (5) give special attention to high-risk populations.

A second recommendation of the Board on Hunger was to create a brief annual report on key indicators of hunger and utilization of key hunger prevention programs. In response to this recommendation the Consortium is releasing the first annual *Report Card on Hunger in Wisconsin - 2000*, which will also serve as a benchmark for measuring future progress on food security.

What is Food Security? In recent years the emerging concept of "food security" has expanded community concern beyond simply hunger prevention to include persons who have uncertain or limited access to food through normal channels. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines "food security" as "*When all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient food to meet their dietary needs for a productive and healthy life*". Therefore, persons who regularly utilize food pantries and soup kitchens have physical access to food -but not economic access - and are considered food insecure, as well as those who reduce the quality or size of meals, or are forced to skip meals because of insufficient income. All food insecure people are at-risk for hunger, but a minority of food insecure people experience hunger.

Addressing food security means going beyond just preventing hunger to establishing programs that enhance self-sufficiency, dignity, choice, and access to food through normal channels. Seen in this context, programs such as, food stamps, school meals, farmers market vouchers, and community gardens, provide a higher level of food security than regular use of soup kitchens and food pantries. The best food security is having sufficient income to purchase an adequate amount of food through normal retail outlets.

Incidence of Hunger and Food Insecurity. Despite Wisconsin's strong economy and low unemployment rate many families are at-risk of hunger and food insecurity. The USDA's Food Insecurity Prevalence Study conducted by the Census Bureau recently estimated the number of households with concerns about not having sufficient food, as well as those that reduced the nutritional quality or size of meals, skipped meals or experienced hunger. The study concluded that 7.2% of all Wisconsin households from 1996 to 1998 were food insecure (9th lowest nationally). This is approximately 400,000 people. The national average is 9.7%. In 1995 our food insecurity index was 6.4%, the second lowest in the nation.

Who is At-Risk of Hunger? All hunger stems from inadequate income but the underlying causes often involve a combination of personal and economic factors. This can include low-paying jobs, lack of full-time employment, inadequate job benefits, age, disability, illness, limited education, single parenthood and many other factors. The USDA Food Insecurity Prevalence Study referenced above found those most at risk of hunger included households with children (15%); single mothers with children (32%); Hispanics (22%); African-Americans (21%); and households with income below the poverty line (35%). The study also noted that people living in rural areas and inner cities were more likely to be food insecure than those living in the suburbs.

A recent UW Extension survey of nearly 4,000 food pantry clients in 27 Wisconsin counties confirmed that many were single parents (33%), elderly (19%), or non-elderly persons with a disability or illness (35%). Almost 3/4 were female and 43% of all households had children. The Wisconsin survey also reported that many clients were employed (44% of households had earned income) but that most didn't earn family supporting wages (83% of households with earned income were paid less than \$8/hour). The survey confirmed that most pantry clients were very poor (75% had income under \$1,000/month). Food pantries generally have reported increases in the number of working families they serve and soup kitchens have reported increases in the number of families with children seeking food assistance.

Consequences of Hunger. Pregnant women, infants, children and the elderly are particularly vulnerable to the effects of undernutrition. Tufts University's Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy recently summarized current scientific research on nutrition and cognitive development in children, stating: "Recent research provides compelling evidence that undernutrition during any period of childhood can have detrimental effects on the cognitive development of children and their later productivity as adults." However, the report also stated that undernutrition is preventable and its negative effects can often be modified. Other major findings:

- Pregnant women who are undernourished are more likely to have low birthweight babies. Along with other health risks that are common to these babies they are more likely to suffer developmental delays.
- Undernutrition along with environmental factors associated with poverty can permanently retard physical growth, brain development and cognitive functioning of children.
- Poor children who attend school hungry perform significantly below non-hungry low income peers on standardized test scores.
- There exists a strong association between family income and the growth and cognitive development of children.
- Improved nutrition and environmental conditions can modify the effects of early undernutrition.
- Supplemental feeding programs (WIC, school nutrition programs) can help to offset threats posed to the child's capacity to learn and perform in school which result from inadequate nutrient intake.

Elderly persons are also particularly susceptible to the effects of undernutrition. *Hunger Prevention in Wisconsin (1998)* noted that "malnutrition in an older person results in slow recovery, [medical] complications, frailty, disability, illness and disease. Good nutritional status in older adults benefits both the individual and society: health is improved, dependence is decreased, time required to recuperate from illness is reduced and utilization of health care resources is less."

Coping Strategies. When families have limited resources they often must choose between buying food and paying for other essentials, like rent, heat, utilities, or vehicle repairs. Limited income elderly persons may have to decide between buying prescription drugs or adequate food. Not surprisingly the recent Extension survey of pantry clients found more than half experienced hardships related to housing, utilities, phone or health insurance.

When faced with this dilemma families frequently will try to pay fixed expenses first, which may not leave enough money for food. In order to fill this food gap households may have to seek assistance from family or friends, reduce the nutritional quality, variety, or size of meals or skip meals entirely. Research has shown that when faced with such options parents reduce their own food intake

first to prevent having to make reductions in their children's meals. The ready availability of federal, state, and community food assistance programs however can reduce the likelihood that families will be forced to take such actions.

Components of Food Security. To ensure low-income families have sufficient food as they move toward greater self-sufficiency requires a diverse partnership of federal, state, community, business, university, and individual resources and programs. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently identified 7 broad strategies to strengthen local food systems and cut the incidence of food insecurity in half by 2010. These strategies include both public and private resources:

- *Federal Food Programs* - strengthen the federal nutrition safety net by supporting full and efficient use of programs such as food stamps, WIC, school meals, Summer Food, CACFP, and TEFAP.
- *Supplemental Food Programs* - bolster supplemental food provided by non-profit groups by aiding food recovery, gleaning and food donation programs.
- *Food Production and Marketing* - improve community food production and marketing by aiding projects that grow, process and distribute food locally.
- *Community Infrastructure* - create new and enhance existing local infrastructures to reduce hunger and food insecurity.
- *Education & Public Awareness* - boost education and awareness by increasing efforts to inform the public about nutrition, food safety and food security.
- *Economic and Job Security* - increase economic and job security by helping low-income people obtain living wages and attain self-sufficiency.
- *Research and Evaluation* - improve research, monitoring and evaluation efforts to help communities assess and strengthen food security.

The State of Hunger and Food Security in Wisconsin – Annual Report 2000 that follows is organized into seven chapters that reflect these seven basic USDA strategies - with an additional discussion on issues pertaining to "Retail Access". The report assesses federal and community-based food programs and resources, and identifies current trends and issues.

KEY FINDINGS

Food Stamp Program. The number of persons receiving food stamps in Wisconsin declined 45% between January 1995 and July 1999 when participation reached the lowest point of the past decade (178,912 people). It was the steepest decline in the nation. During this period the number of low-income persons (below 125% of poverty) increased 7%. Between July 1999 – June 2000, the number of food stamp participants has increased 10% to 197,207 - the highest rate of growth in the U.S. - primarily as a result of increased outreach efforts by DWD and local agencies. According to the most recent national data available from USDA, Wisconsin served 51% of eligible persons in September 1997 - the 4th lowest percentage in the U.S.

Special Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). In FFY 1999 the average monthly participation at 230 WIC clinics statewide was 104,080 persons - an estimated 67% of eligible pregnant & postpartum women, infants and children under 5. This is a drop of 2% from the previous, and a decline of 5% from FFY 95. At present over a third of all pregnant women in Wisconsin and nearly a quarter of all infants and young children receive WIC benefits. The most recent national estimates from the USDA show that Wisconsin served 75% of eligible infants and children in 1998 - the national average was 69%.

The National School Lunch Program. The School Lunch Program is widely available in Wisconsin with 95% of public school districts and 47% of private schools participating at 2,443 sites in the 99/00 school year. Of the 920,777 children who were enrolled at participating sites in October 1999, 26% were income eligible to receive free or reduced price meals - unchanged from the 96/97 school year. In all, 74% of low-income students at participating schools ate meals.

The School Breakfast Program. Wisconsin ranks last in the country on measures of access to School Breakfast. *School Participation:* 37% of schools that offered School Lunch also offered School Breakfast in 99/00. Nationally 75% of schools offered both programs. Wisconsin had a 9% increase in the number of participating schools. *Low-Income Student Participation:* Out of 193,812 low-income children, who participated in School Lunch each day in March 2000, 23% also received School Breakfast - nationally this percentage was 42%. Although Wisconsin served less than half the national average of low-income students, there was a 9% increase in the number of participating low-income students compared to the previous year.

The Summer Food Service Program for Children. Wisconsin served an average of 33,356 children each day in July 1999 - a 1% increase over 1998, and a 61% increase since summer 1995. In 1999 meals were available at 412 sites - a 43% increase over 1995. Despite these improvements, just 19% of low-income

children who participated in School Lunch in October 1999 also participated at some point in the Summer Food Program during July 1999. This is up from 12% in 1995. At present half of Wisconsin counties operate at least 1 Summer Food site - up from 1/3 of counties in 1995.

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). *Family Day Care Homes:* The average daily attendance in participating family day care homes was 22,303 children in October 1999 – essentially unchanged from 2 years earlier. However the number of participating homes declined 28% from 96/97 to 98/99 as a result of federal changes that reduced payments for many providers. The number of homes increased in 99/00. *Child Care Centers:* In October 1999 there were 51,253 children receiving meals and snacks at 951 participating child care centers, 54% of whom were from low-income households. This is a 21% increase in low-income participation compared to October 1996. *Adult Day Care Centers:* In October 1999 the average daily attendance at 18 centers was 950 adults.

Elderly Nutrition Programs. The number of meals served at Congregate Meal sites has declined 15% since 1995 while meals served by the Home-Delivered Meals Program has increased 10% during the same period. This reflects an increasing number of home-bound elderly. Overall utilization of ENP meals has dropped 4% since 1995.

Food Pantries. 130 food pantries in 56 counties responding to a recent WISCAP survey reported a 9% average increase in demand in September 1999 compared to September 1998. Demand in September 2000 was constant. An earlier 1997 survey of 149 food pantries found a 24% increase in demand over 1996 - suggesting that while food pantry demand in 2000 may be leveling off it remains significantly elevated over 1996 levels.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). In FFY 2000, Wisconsin's TEFAP network distributed over 4.3 million pounds of food valued at \$2.8 million. The TEFAP network coordinated local distribution through 185 food pantries, 40 soup kitchens and 30 shelters.

Community Gardens. UW Extension identified 133 community gardens in 29 counties. These included rental gardens, community gardens, food pantry gardens, youth and school gardens and gardens at elderly housing facilities.

Community –Supported Agriculture (CSAs). CSA farms enable consumers to purchase fresh, organic produce from local farmers by buying shares of the harvest prior to planting. The shares provide farmers with capital and guarantee a market for their produce, while consumers receive a weekly supply of fresh produce throughout the growing season. There were no CSA farms in the U.S. prior to 1986 but by 1997 there were over 600 nationwide. That year, Wisconsin had 53 CSA farms in the CSA Regional Directory – one of the largest number of any state.

Farmers Markets. Wisconsin had 147 farmers markets listed with the USDA in 2000 – a 20% increase over 1998. The WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) provides market vouchers to low-income recipients to purchase produce at local markets. Although only available in 21 counties – FMNP has grown rapidly. Participation in 2000 was 68% higher than 1995 when only 3 counties were participating.

Kitchen Incubators. A shared-use commercial kitchen (kitchen incubator) is a type of business incubator where caterers, vendors, farmers, gardeners, and producers of specialty food items can prepare food products in a fully licensed and certified kitchen. They are especially well suited to limited resource entrepreneurs who want to begin or expand a food product business but can't afford to set up their own commercial kitchen and office. The Wisconsin Kitchen Incubator Network documented 9 Kitchen Incubator Projects in various stages of development across the state in 2000.

Food Buying Cooperatives. Food buying cooperatives enable customers - often low/moderate income elderly on fixed incomes - to save on food purchases. 70 counties have at least one of the three major non-specialty food buying cooperatives in Wisconsin (SHARE, Food Fare, and Fair For All). In 1999 they sold over 188,000 food packages - a 19% decline from 1995. The largest, SHARE of Wisconsin, recently reversed declining sales by giving customers control of food purchases. It is the only SHARE organization in the nation to do so.

Nutrition Education. Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program (WNEP) operated in 54 Wisconsin counties in 2000. Educators teach low-income families about food safety, nutritional food choices, and managing food budgets. WNEP made over 286,000 educational contacts in 2000 - a 68% increase over 1995.

Hunger Councils. UW Extension identified 18 counties with county-wide hunger prevention councils. About half of these multi-agency councils appeared to focus primarily on supporting local emergency food pantries, but the others were involved in a variety of hunger prevention activities including expanding access to federal food programs, starting new community gardens, farmers markets and SHARE sites and coordinating community efforts.

1. FEDERAL/STATE FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Food Stamp Program
The Special Nutrition Program for Women, Infants & Children (WIC)
The National School Lunch Program (SLP)
The School Breakfast Program (SBP)
The Summer Food Service Program for Children (SFSP)
Special Milk Program
Wisconsin Morning Milk Program
Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
Nutritional Improvement Program for the Elderly
Elderly Nutrition Programs

FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

The food stamp program has been America's largest and most important anti-hunger program since it became available nationwide in 1974. It is the only federal poverty program that provides benefits regardless of age, health or family status. Participants receive monthly benefits by means of an electronic Quest Card that can be used like cash to pay for qualifying food items at grocery stores. The program is administered at the federal level by USDA, the state level by DWD and at the local level by county/W-2 and tribal agencies. Federal rules require food stamp eligibility to be determined by civil service employees.

Eligibility. Food stamp recipients can be grouped into 4 categories: (1) families with children, (2) elderly, (3) disabled, and (4) able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs). Applicants must meet financial and non-financial eligibility criteria that vary somewhat between groups.

- *Gross income*¹ must be less than 130% of poverty for families and ABAWDs.
- *Net income* after deductions must be less than 100% of poverty for all groups. Deductions may be taken for child care, child support, medical expenses, utilities, and some shelter costs.
- *Assets*² cannot exceed \$2,000 for families, disabled, and ABAWDs, and \$3,000 for households with an elderly member.
- *Work (or work-related) requirements* apply only for families and ABAWDs. Parents with children under 6 are exempt.

¹ Families that qualify for TANF funded services (W-2, child care) may be categorically eligible, and thus exempt from food stamp "gross" income and asset limits.

² Families that qualify for TANF funded services (W-2, child care) may be categorically eligible, and thus exempt from food stamp "gross" income and asset limits.

Participants must have their eligibility and benefit level reviewed at 3-month intervals. Both the initial application and subsequent recertifications require extensive verification and documentation. Federal food stamp rules permit elderly and disabled persons to be certified for up to 12 months at a time and up to 6 months for all other households. Wisconsin certifies stable elderly and disabled households for up to 12 months, and all other households for 3 months.

Value. Studies have shown food stamps substantially improve the nutritional health of participants and provide a vital defense against hunger. Food stamps are higher on the food security continuum compared to food pantries and soup kitchens because they: (1) enhance dignity by helping families to get food from non-emergency, non-stigmatizing retail outlets; (2) ensure better access to food through widely available grocery stores that are open long hours; (3) offer full choice in food selection; (4) reduce waste because only preferred food is purchased; (5) enable access to culturally appropriate foods; and (6) ensure discrete participation through use of EBT technology.

Participation. Between January 1995 and July 1999 monthly food stamp participation fell 45% from 326,610 people to 178,912 - when participation reached its lowest point in the past decade. This decline was the steepest in the nation.

Jan-95	Jan-96	Jan-97	Jan-98	Jan-99	Jan-00
326,610	296,060	244,260	204,155	184,938	189,549

Participation declined even though the number of potentially eligible persons increased. The U.S. Census Bureau estimated the number of persons in Wisconsin who lived at or below 125% of poverty³ increased by 40,000 persons between 1995 and 1999 (from 610,000 to 651,000). During this period the annual number of unduplicated persons who received food stamps in Wisconsin declined by 149,000 people (from 458,538 to 309,117 people).

The percentage of Wisconsin citizens with income below 125% of poverty that received food stamps dropped from 75% in 1995 to 47% in 1999. The most recent *national* estimates available from the USDA report that Wisconsin served 51% of eligible low-income people⁴ in September 1997. This was the 4th lowest percentage in the U.S.

³ All persons with income below 125% of poverty are income eligible for food stamps. However applicants must also meet certain asset and non-financial criteria to be eligible.

⁴ USDA figures are based on the number of persons estimated to meet both financial and non-financial eligibility criteria.

The number of unduplicated elderly using food stamps dropped 9% between 1995 and 1999 (from 21,653 to 19,60). The number of unduplicated disabled persons (non-elderly) increased 9% during the same period (from 30,481 to 33,141).

Although overall food stamp participation is down significantly compared to 1995 levels there have been gradual steady increases since the July 1999 low enrollment point. From July 1999 to June 2000 the number of persons receiving food stamps increased 10% to 197,207 persons. In fact, the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) the leading national anti-hunger advocacy organization reported that Wisconsin leads the nation in growth in food stamp participation. The state's 10% growth rate was twice as large as the next closest state (Nevada) during the twelve months ending June 2000. Nationally participation during this period dropped by more than 4%. Recent increases are largely the result of increased outreach efforts by DWD and local agencies.

Recipient Profile. As of January 2000, 75% of recipients are either children, elderly, or disabled. The majority (60%) is female, and more than half are children (56%). The largest racial group is white households (46%), followed by African Americans (35%). About 1/3 of households report some earned income, one of the highest percentages in the nation.

Benefit Levels. The federal government pays one hundred percent of food stamp benefits and shares the administrative cost equally with the state. The amount of monthly benefits issued to households is based on family size and net income. A family of four with no net income, for instance, can receive a maximum of \$426. The average household of 2.5 persons received \$140/month in benefits - about 60 cents/meal/person (May 2000). However, there is wide variation in benefit size. For example, almost a third (29%) of households received \$10 or less. A \$10 monthly benefit equates to 11 cents/meal for a household of one, or 4 cents/meal for a household of three.

In calendar year 1999 Wisconsin distributed \$124.3 million in food stamp benefits to low-income households. This is 41% less than the amount of benefits distributed in 1995 (\$210.8 million), but just 2% less than 1998. Food stamp recipients received a monthly average of \$10.3 million in benefits, a decline of 41% from the monthly average of \$17.5 million in 1995.

If 1995 participation levels had been maintained in subsequent years it is estimated that Wisconsin's low-income families would have received an additional \$253 million dollars. Not only would this have increased the level of resources available to low-income families and reduced demand on food pantries, but also more federal dollars would have been returned to Wisconsin, and grocers and farmers would have received millions more in retail food purchases.

Administrative Costs. Although the overall number of recipients has dropped since FFY 95, administrative costs have decreased only about 15%, primarily due to the costs of automation and frequent changes in federal policies. In FFY 99 food stamp administrative costs were \$45 million - an estimated average of \$364 per household. Thirty percent of households are receiving \$120/year in benefits but it requires three times that amount in administrative costs to deliver those benefits. This situation is a reflection of a low benefit level, highly bureaucratic federal requirements, and the fact that it requires essentially the same level of administrative processing to qualify and distribute small payments as it does large ones.

EBT Transition. Wisconsin recently completed its transition from paper vouchers to the electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card. Participants now receive food stamp benefits via the electronic Quest card, which can be used like cash to purchase food at retail grocery stores. EBT was implemented to reduce administrative costs, stigma and fraud and has been fully implemented in all counties as of November 2000. Initial problems, identified in the pilot phase (Rock County) from October - December 1999 included clients not picking up their cards, problems with cards during transactions, and replacement cards not being issued. These issues were resolved prior to statewide rollout.

Food Stamps and Restaurants. Food stamp rules allow certain recipients, including elderly, disabled and homeless persons, to obtain low-cost meals from authorized restaurants because they may be unable to prepare their own meals. To qualify, restaurants must enter into an agreement with DWD, then apply to USDA for approval. Currently there are no restaurants that have obtained such approval. The recent introduction of the EBT card may make the food stamp program more appealing to restaurant owners and customers alike.

LAB Report Investigates Declines. In 1999, the General Accounting Office released a national study of food stamp participation rates in each state from FFY 1996 - 1998. Because of legislative concern that Wisconsin's enrollment declines were the highest in the nation, the Legislative Audit Bureau (LAB) was directed by the state legislature to evaluate the program. Their report confirmed that enrollment dropped 45% between early 1995 and summer 1999, while noting that slight increases have occurred each month since. They attributed the decline to a number of factors:

- The number of households qualifying for the minimum benefit (\$10/month) increased 17% from 1995 to 2000. As income increases, benefits decrease, which may have discouraged interest.
- DWD's "light touch" philosophy resulted in some caseworkers not offering food stamps and other benefits to clients unless specifically requested.

- DWD shortened the recertification period to 3 months to reduce errors in benefit calculation, but this increased inconvenience for families. As an option for recipients, DWD received a waiver from the USDA/FNS to offer mail-in and phone-in reviews for alternating 3-month reviews.
- Federal changes increased work requirements and limited participation by certain persons.
- Administrative procedures in some W-2 and county/tribal human service agencies, including inadequate posting and provision of required informational materials, may have contributed to the decline.

The report noted that reductions in food stamps have been associated with increased demand at food pantries and soup kitchens. It also noted that in response to concerns, DWD had taken steps to increase participation and improve administration. (See *Outreach Initiatives* below for details on DWD's recent efforts to increase participation.)

LAB was generally positive about the potential of Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) to improve access, reduce stigma and fraud, and lower administrative costs, but urged DWD to monitor participation by elderly and disabled persons (who may have difficulty with EBT) and report to the Joint Legislative Audit Committee by July 1, 2001. LAB concluded that despite recent outreach efforts concern remains about low uptake rates, and relatively modest gains in participation. They urged DWD to continue efforts to expand access, and indicated that changes to federal law (to reduce red tape and simplify eligibility and administrative requirements) or waivers of existing federal regulations, are needed. The full report can be obtained from LAB's website at www.legis.state.wi.us/lab

Another factor that has likely contributed to the food stamp decline has been the increased level of stigma generally associated with low-income programs in the wake of welfare reform. Because food stamps are often viewed as welfare rather than as a nutrition assistance program many families are reluctant to apply.

Outreach Initiatives. In response to concerns about declining participation DWD has placed an increased emphasis on improving food stamp outreach and customer service. These efforts have been substantial and multi-faceted and are the major reason for Wisconsin's 10% growth in food stamp participation over the past 18 months.

- *Improved Access.*
 - The state provided \$1.9 million for a combined food stamp, MA, and child care outstationing effort in Milwaukee, Dane, Kenosha, Fond du Lac, Sheboygan, Monroe and Oneida Counties. In 1999, over 20 local agencies had outstationed eligibility workers to accept applications at community sites (food pantries, schools, community centers, and

clinics) in addition to regular sites. Milwaukee now has at least 26 outstation sites.

- Thirty three local agencies offered extended weekday hours to improve access. This included all 6 Milwaukee W-2 offices.
- *Marketing and Media Campaigns.*
 - DWD created television/radio ads promoting the accessibility and ease of the new EBT card and is purchasing airtime statewide to reach the majority of eligible food stamp participants.
 - Milwaukee W-2 agencies announced a \$500,000 food stamp outreach initiative. One agency's initiative included 22 billboards, 25 bus placards, 600 television spots and 374 radio ads.
 - DWD distributed 75,000 food stamp publications on food stamp rights and responsibilities for display in local offices, and distributed 2,000 food stamp posters for display at community locations.
 - DWD received assistance from food pantry networks connected to Second Harvest and Community Action Agencies to encourage food pantry clients to apply for food stamps.
- *Other Outreach Activities.*
 - DWD issued policy directives to local administrative agencies to ensure the public is aware that food stamp applications may be filed at any W-2 or Economic Support Agency at any time. Local agency workers were reminded of the right of potential applicants to file an application on the same day they enter an agency office.
 - DWD's Division of Economic Support (DES) is developing a letter to mail to specific closed food stamp cases to encourage them to reapply if it would be pertinent to their circumstances.
 - DES is planning focus groups around the state to obtain feedback from key stakeholders on food stamps and EBT in order to guide development of an outreach campaign.
 - DES meets monthly with Milwaukee community groups, Milwaukee County Department of Human Services and W-2 agencies to improve customer service and public access. DES is working to realign caseloads in Milwaukee as well as implement a centralized Change Reporting Call Center to improve customer service.
- *Other Initiatives*
 - DES is participating in the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) Food Stamp Modernization Workgroup to submit food stamp policy improvements to Congress for reauthorization of the Food Stamp Act in 2002. State agencies are conducting meetings with community-based organizations to share concerns and develop an action plan.

- The Department of Administration (DOA) recently assembled a Food Stamp Federal Policy Workgroup, to coordinate key Wisconsin stakeholders in seeking policy revisions and increased federal revenue to benefit the state.
- DES will be seeking information from other states regarding USDA waivers that have been implemented, and evaluate their potential impact in Wisconsin.

Error Rate. Food stamp error rates reflect the percentage of cases in which benefits issued are either too high or too low based on the household's actual income, assets, and other eligibility criteria. Households with earned income are especially prone to error since income fluctuates more than persons on fixed incomes, which can lead to errors in benefit calculation. Wisconsin's food stamp error rate has been above the national average since 1994. This may be partially due to Wisconsin having the highest percentage of food stamp participants with earned income nationwide. The USDA has penalized Wisconsin \$2.7 million since 1994 for having error rates higher than the national average. USDA permits states to reinvest some of these monies in efforts to reduce errors.

In 1999, DES implemented a Payment Accuracy and Case Review (PACR) project in Milwaukee County in a targeted effort to reduce error rates and help eliminate federal fiscal sanctions. The project continued in Milwaukee and was expanded to assist other counties in 2000. Wisconsin's FFY 99 error rate was 13.4% compared with a national average of 9.9%. This was an improvement of 1.2% over FFY 98 error rates and earned Wisconsin an award from the USDA as the "most improved" among the 6 Midwestern Region states.

Regulatory Changes.

- DWD received a waiver to allow phone-in and mail-in eligibility reviews at alternating 3 month periods to make recertification easier (1999).
- The federal government also recently issued regulations, with various effective dates in 2001, that:
 - Provide a variety of options for states to expand the food stamp vehicle exemption policies to meet or exceed their TANF vehicle policies.
 - Permit states to provide 3 months of food stamps to TANF households that lose eligibility due to increased earned income, thereby easing the transition off food stamps.
 - Allow states to relieve working families from reporting modest changes in income for up to six-months at a time, thus increasing state incentives to lengthen certification periods for working families without increasing errors.

- Strengthen systems to ensure that food stamp cases are not closed without review when a family leaves cash assistance; require states to inform applicants that many rules that apply to cash assistance, such as time limits, do not apply to food stamp eligibility; limit intrusive and stigmatizing verification methods; and provide reasonable opportunity to reschedule for persons that miss interviews.
- DES is analyzing this extensive set of regulations, and will be determining options and procedures needed to implement policy revisions at the local level, and in the CARES statewide computer system. The Division is awaiting an implementing memo from FNS to provide official guidance as to what the states can do with these regulations.

THE SPECIAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN (WIC)

Created by Congress in 1972, WIC was established as a nationwide program in 1975 in response to medical evidence that inadequate nutrition during pregnancy contributes to premature birth, low-birth weight and consequent health problems. WIC provides an important source of food assistance for low-income pregnant and postpartum women, breastfeeding mothers, infants and young children who are found to be at nutritional risk. In addition to checks for nutritious foods, participants receive basic health screening, nutrition education and breastfeeding promotion and support. The program is administered at the federal level by USDA and at the state level by DHFS.

Eligibility. Qualifying persons must have gross family income under 185% of the federal poverty level (\$30,895 for a family of four), and be determined to be at nutritional risk. There is no asset test or work requirement. Participants receive food checks that can be redeemed at 1,100 participating grocery stores and 114 pharmacies for specific foods determined by WIC to be high in the nutrients needed for growth and development. Food packages are tailored to individual needs.

Value. WIC enables low-income pregnant and postpartum women to properly feed their children during the critical early years of growth and development. Studies have shown that compared to women not enrolled, pregnant women in WIC seek prenatal care earlier in pregnancy, consume more key nutrients, and have fewer premature births, and experience less fetal and infant death. It is estimated that for every WIC dollar spent on pregnant women, between \$2 and \$4 are saved in later medical expenses.

Wisconsin research has further shown that three quarters of low-income children with anemia at the time of WIC certification showed improvement at subsequent health checks, and that WIC children have lower overall prevalence of anemia. A national WIC evaluation found 4 and 5 year old children whose mothers participated in WIC during pregnancy had better vocabulary scores than their non-WIC peers. Other studies have found improved infant memory.

WIC also provides breast-feeding support and education to new mothers. As a result of WIC education initiatives breastfeeding initiation rates have increased significantly, from 32% to 42%.

Participation. In FFY 1999 the average monthly participation at 230 WIC clinics statewide was 104,080 persons - an estimated 67% of eligible persons. This is a drop of 2% from FFY 98 participation levels when the program was estimated to have served 68% of eligible persons and a decline of 5% from FFY 95 when WIC served 70% of eligible people. At present over a third of all pregnant women in Wisconsin and nearly a quarter of all infants and young children receive WIC benefits. The most recent national data from the USDA shows that Wisconsin served an estimated 75% of eligible infants and children in 1998 compared to a national average of 69%.

WIC Average Monthly Participation				
1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
109,151	109,712	108,898	106,352	104,080

Client Profile. In FFY 99 nearly three fourths of participants were infants and children:

Infants	30% of recipients
Children age 1-4	42% of recipients
Pregnant women	16% of recipients
Postpartum women	11% of recipients

Recipients belonged to the following ethnic groups:

White	57% of recipients
Black	23% of recipients
Hispanic	12% of recipients
Asian	5% of recipients
Native American	2% of recipients

Reimbursements. Overall WIC provided \$59 million in food coupons to low-income families in FFY 99 - an average of \$4.9 million each month. This annual total is an increase of 6% compared with FFY 95 when there were more participants but food packages cost 12% less. Food vouchers are worth an average of about \$47/person each month.

In FFY 99 WIC received additional funding of \$518,000 (\$500,000 in TANF and \$18,000 in GPR) to offset reductions in federal dollars that threatened to force cutbacks in outreach and certain services.

Farmers Market Nutrition Program. The WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) began in 1995 with the dual goal of increasing the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables by low-income WIC participants and increasing sales of Wisconsin grown produce at local farmers markets across the state. (For additional information on Farmers Market see pages 55-56).

THE NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

Congress created the School Lunch Program (SLP) in 1946 after discovering that many World War II military recruits were undernourished. SLP provides a federal per meal reimbursement for lunches served in all public or private non-profit schools and residential child care institutions that meet eligibility requirements. The program is administered at the federal level by USDA and at the state level by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI).

Eligibility. The amount each child pays to participate in School Lunch is determined by household income. Children qualify to receive free meals if family income is less than 130% of the federal poverty level (\$22,165 for a family of four), or reduced-price meals if income is between 130% FPL and 185% FPL (\$31,542 for a family of four). Children whose household income is greater than 185% FPL qualifies for paid meals.

The primary means to qualify students for free or reduced price meals is for participating schools to distribute applications to parents. An alternate method is used in some school districts to automatically certify households participating in food stamps or W-2, so children can participate without submitting an application. This process is known as Direct Certification and has been shown to increase the number of low-income students who participate in the program. Schools submit student enrollment lists to DPI, who then forwards it to DWD to match against food stamp and W-2 enrollment databases. Although the number of school districts using this provision has increased in the last several years presently just 16% of Wisconsin's 426 public school districts use this method (70 districts). Direct Certification is used less among private schools.

Value/Research. Several national studies have shown the School Lunch Program improves the nutrient intake of participating children and accounts for one half to one third of low-income children's daily minimum nutrient requirement. A Tufts University publication (1995) demonstrated the positive link between children's nutrition and cognitive development and underscored the vital role of school meals in improving children's health, behavior and academic performance.

Participation. The School Lunch Program is widely available in Wisconsin with 95% of public school districts and 47% of private schools participating at 2,443 sites in the 99/00 school year. Of the 920,777 children who were enrolled at participating sites in October 1999, 26% were income eligible to receive free or reduced price meals (236,664) - unchanged from the 96/97 school year.

Each day an average of 500,000 children in Wisconsin receive safe, nutritious lunches that strengthen their capacity to learn and grow (35% are from low-income families). In all 74% of low-income students at participating schools ate meals.

In the 99/00 school year 87.7 million lunches were served to all participating children - almost a 4% increase over 96/97 school year. 36% of all meals served were free or reduced price (31.3 million meals). This is down slightly from 37% in the 96/97 school year.

Although School Lunch is available in virtually all public schools and about half of private schools there remain about 20 school districts that do not offer it. Manitowoc is the largest school district without the School Lunch Program.

Reimbursements. The Federal government reimburses each school based on the number of free, reduced-price, and paid meals it serves to participating students. In 1999/00 Wisconsin schools received \$70.1 million in federal reimbursements and an additional \$4.1 million in required state matching dollars (about 5 cents/meal). In addition schools received federal commodities valued at \$13 million for use in either their School Lunch or Breakfast programs. Although the majority of participating children are not low-income, because of higher reimbursement rates for FRP meals nearly three quarters of the federal reimbursement was for meals served to low-income students.

Provisions 2 and 3. These special rules allow school districts with high percentages of low-income students to provide meals to ALL children without charge. Under these provisions schools collect meal applications every 4 years and can receive further extensions if the local economy hasn't changed significantly in the interval. During the first year of participation schools collect baseline data on the number of free, reduced-price, and paid meals served during the school year. Under Provision 2 in subsequent years the school continues to count the number of meals served each month, but the reimbursement is based on the percentage of each type of meal served during the first year. Under

Provision 3, after the base year, schools do not count the number of meals they serve - so the reimbursement is based on the total amount received in the baseline year (adjusted for enrollment changes and increases in reimbursement rates). The reduced stigma and higher participation rates that result when all children eat free, produce savings after the first year that can offset the increased cost of providing free meals to all.

After School Care Snack Program. Schools that offer after school enrichment or academic programs may also serve snacks to participating children if the school operates the School Lunch Program. School districts where more than 50% of children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals qualify under the "area eligibility" rules and may claim all snacks served at the higher "free" reimbursement rate. In 99/00 there were 71 school districts offering the snack program at 130 sites. Schools were reimbursed \$411,854 for snacks served.

THE SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM

The School Breakfast Program (SBP) began as a pilot project in 1966 to assist low-income students, and then was expanded to all schools in 1972. The program operates under the same administration and eligibility criteria as the School Lunch Program.

Value/Research. Studies have repeatedly shown significant benefits to children who participate in School Breakfast programs, including improved academic performance, reduced absences, fewer illnesses, and improved classroom behavior. USDA research has shown SBP provides children with one quarter of their daily nutritional requirements. Yet despite the importance of breakfast, children may not eat nutritious breakfasts or may not eat at all for a variety of reasons. These include insufficient income for food, a lack of assistance or supervision by working parents who leave early for work, children not feeling hungry when they first wake, and rushed morning schedules.

Participation. In 1999/00 just over 51,000 children participated each day in SBP - just 10% of the children who ate School Lunch. The vast majority of children eating breakfast were from low-income households (76%). The percentage of breakfast meals served to non needy students has increased from 17% in 1996/97 to 23% in 1999/00.

Unfortunately, despite the importance of the program to low-income households it is not widely available in Wisconsin. In fact, Wisconsin has ranked last in the nation for the past 5 years on the two primary measures of program availability and usage:

- **School Participation.** In 1999/00, 37% of schools that offered School Lunch (2,443 sites) also offered School Breakfast (896 sites). Nationally 75% of schools offered both programs. Because so few schools offer SBP in Wisconsin, the nutritional options available to low-income parents and working parents is greatly reduced. Fortunately, Wisconsin did see a 9% increase in the number of participating schools in the 1999/00 school year.

	Oct 95	Oct 96	Oct 97	Oct 98	Oct 99
Number of sites offering School Breakfast.	595	651	745	825	896
Number of sites offering School Lunch.	2379	2387	2427	2440	2443
WI - Percent of schools offering both School Lunch and Breakfast.	25%	27%	31%	34%	37%
U.S - Percent of schools offering both School Lunch and Breakfast.	71%	72%	73%	74%	75%

- **Low-Income Student Participation.** Out of 174,776 low-income children who participated in School Lunch each day in October 1999, only 22% also received School Breakfast - 39,040 children. (This number increased to 23% in March of 2000). Nationally 42% of low-income children participated in both programs. Despite the fact that Wisconsin serves less than half the national average of low-income students, the state saw a 9% increase in the number of participating low-income students compared to the previous year⁵. The majority of this improvement is probably the result of the increase in the number of participating schools. If Wisconsin's average growth in participation over the past 5 years is sustained, it will take 13 more years to reach 1999 national averages.

	Oct 95	Oct 96	Oct 97	Oct 98	Oct 99	Mar 00
Aver. Daily Participation of students receiving free/reduced-price meals in School Breakfast.	29,190	32,946	35,056	35,922	39,040	44,156
Aver. Daily Participation of students receiving free/reduced-price meals in School Lunch.	174,424	178,951	178,484	177,506	174,776	193,812
WI - Percent of low-income students receiving both Lunch and Breakfast	17%	18%	20%	20%	22%	23%
U.S - Percent of low-income students receiving both Lunch and Breakfast	40%	40%	41%	42%	42%	42%

⁵ October 1998 and October 1999.

A 1997 DPI survey also found that 70 school districts had at least one school that provided some type of alternative breakfast program. These alternative programs were supported with local funds, but the amount and nutritional quality of meals varied widely. Many would not have met the minimum nutritional standards set by the USDA for SBP meals.

Reimbursements. Schools receive \$1.12 per meal for free breakfasts, 82 cents for reduced price meals, and 21 cents for paid breakfasts in federal reimbursements. In the 1999/00 school year Wisconsin schools served 9.6 million meals to a daily average of 51,328 children and received \$9,137,290 in federal reimbursements. The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) estimates Wisconsin could receive nearly \$9 million additional federal dollars annually if the percentage of low-income students who received both School Lunch and Breakfast increased from 22% to 55% - the average rate of the 3 top performing states.

Good Breakfast for Good Learning Campaign. This community-based coalition has worked to increase awareness of the importance of breakfast to student nutritional and cognitive health. The GBGL campaign involves partners from many different organizations, including DPI, food security, school food service, advocacy, public health, nutrition education, and emergency food distribution. This public/private partnership has developed and distributed public awareness packets, provided resource suggestions to schools, developed and aired media and promotional materials, and performed presentations at schools and community organizations. Since the campaign's inception in 1997, GBGL has conducted over 100 breakfast orientations and reached more than 5,000 teachers, parents and school administrators. The campaign reports a significant increase in requests for promotional materials from schools operating School Breakfast Programs as a means to increase student participation.

THE SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN

In 1968 Congress established the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) to help meet the nutritional needs of low-income children during the summer when access to school meal is limited. It is administered by USDA at the federal level and DPI at the state level.

Value. Food pantries often report increased demand during summer months, which may be due in part to the absence of school meals. The Summer Food Program can play a vital role in helping communities to meet this increased need and can be easily integrated into existing educational, recreational or enrichment programs. When a meal component is added to summer enrichment programs it improves participation levels, as well as children's nutritional health. In 1999 an

average of 2.1 million children participated each day during the summer in the Summer Food Program in the U.S. - an estimated 22% of needy children.

Eligibility. Public schools, non-profit private schools, community-based organizations, day camps, residential camps, and government and tribal agencies that operate programs during the summer that serve primarily low-income children are eligible to receive federal reimbursements for meals. Individual sites can qualify based on the location of their program, enrollment in their program, or if they serve certain special groups.

- **Open Sites (Location).** Programs located in economically distressed areas where at least half of the children in the area have household incomes under 185% FPL qualify to receive SFSP reimbursements. Sponsors typically look at School District data on the percentage of children eligible for FRP meals, but other sources like Census information are also used.
- **Enrolled Sites.** If at least half the children enrolled in the program are low-income (less than 185% FPL)- regardless of its location -then it qualifies. This is determined from applications completed by parents.
- **Special Groups.** If at least half of the children in a program are migrant children then the program is automatically eligible.

Once a program becomes eligible the meals served to ALL children - regardless of income - qualify for federal reimbursements. (The one exception is residential camps, which must qualify as enrolled sites and can receive reimbursements only for meals served to low-income children.)

Sponsorship. A wide variety of organizations that provide educational, cultural, religious, or recreational programs for children during the summer can become SFSP sponsors - even organizations that only want to feed children. SFSP reimbursements enable these programs to provide meals in addition to their regular activities. Combining food with program activities improves attendance as well as children's nutritional health. The largest group of sponsors are schools operating summer programs, but others also include Community Action Agencies, YMCAs/YWCAs, Boys & Girls Clubs, UW Extension, Salvation Armies, churches, day camps, and park and recreation programs, to name a few.

Sponsors may also provide meals to children participating in other nearby eligible programs, which makes the program more cost-effective for the sponsor while enabling partner organizations to feed their children without having to purchase or prepare food or maintain extensive records. The number of sites a non-profit sponsor may serve is 25.

Participation. In Wisconsin, as in many other states, Summer Food is underutilized but growing. The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) recently reported that Wisconsin served an average of 33,356 children each day in July 1999. This represents just a 1% increase over 1998, but a 61% increase over the summer of 1995 when only 20,471 children received meals.

In 1999 SFSP meals were provided by 66 agencies serving children at 412 sites across the state - a 43% increase in the number of sites compared to 1995.

Despite these improvements in participation and access to the program there is still much room for growth. At present 19% of low-income children, who participated in School Lunch in October 1999 also participated at some point in the Summer Food Program during the previous July, which means 81% of low-income children had no access at all to SFSP. This is an improvement over the 12% in 1995. The problem is further exacerbated by the fact that many Summer Food sites operate for only a portion of the summer - especially in rural areas. At present half of Wisconsin counties operate at least 1 Summer Food site - up from a 1/3 of counties in 1995.

Reimbursement. Summer Food sponsors receive federal per meal reimbursements based on the type of meal(s) served (breakfast, lunch/supper, or snack), plus a corresponding administrative cost for each meal type, and a supplement for rural sites or sites that prepare their own meals. To qualify for federal reimbursement, meals must meet USDA nutritional requirements. Most sponsors may serve up to 2 meals per day. In 1999 Summer Food sponsors and other participating organizations jointly provided 1.35 million meals to low-income children at risk of summer hunger. Sponsors received \$2.2 million in federal reimbursements and federal commodities valued at \$208,000. FRAC estimates that Wisconsin could have received an additional \$2.88 million in federal reimbursements and served an additional 48,518 children in 1999 if we had served 45% of the low-income children who ate School Lunch during the school year (the average level attained by the top 5 performing states) instead of 19%.

SPECIAL MILK PROGRAM

The federal Special Milk Program was created in 1966 to encourage consumption of fluid milk by children attending non-profit schools, nursery schools, child care centers, summer camps and similar non-profit institutions. The program provides reimbursements for half-pints of milk served to children in participating programs. Special Milk is administered by USDA at the federal level and DPI at the state level.

Value. The program increases consumption of milk by children who do not have access to the food and resources of the school meal programs. This could be especially important to low-income students.

Eligibility. Any non-profit school or child care institution that does not participate in School Lunch or Breakfast is eligible to receive reimbursements for milk served to enrolled children. Children attending half day kindergarten or preschool are also eligible to participate in Special Milk if their school operates School Lunch or Breakfast but they don't have access to it.

Participation. There were 731 agencies providing milk at 950 sites throughout the state. This is a drop of 14% from the 1106 sites that participated in 97/98.

Reimbursements. Schools may choose to provide milk free to all children in the school (non-pricing program), or they may charge some or all (pricing program). Reimbursements depend on which pricing scheme the school uses. Participating schools and organizations received \$1.4 million in payments for serving 11,114,832 half pints of milk. This is a decline of 13% from the 12.7 million pints served in 97/98 - mirroring the drop in sites that offer the program.

WISCONSIN MORNING MILK PROGRAM

The Wisconsin legislature created the Wisconsin Morning Milk Program in 1987 to provide payment for milk (or fruit juice substitutes) served during milk break to low-income school children in kindergarten through 5th grade. The program is administered by DPI.

Eligibility. All Wisconsin public or private non-profit schools may receive reimbursements for milk served during milk break to children in grades k-5 who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. Schools may serve milk to non low-income children but do not receive any state reimbursements. The milk served may be whole, 2%, 1%, skim or chocolate, but if a child is allergic to milk or otherwise has a condition that prohibits them from drinking milk, then juice must be offered.

Participation. In the 99/00 school year there were 193 public schools and 40 private schools participating in WMMP. The number of participating schools has remained fairly steady over the past several years.

Reimbursements. Schools are paid the average net dairy cost for each half pint of milk. However, until recently, state funding was insufficient to pay all school claims requiring DPI to prorate claims. In 99/00 schools served 3.9 million ½ pints of milk and received \$574,881 in state reimbursements.

CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) was originally created by Congress in 1968 as a child care food program, then established as a separate program in 1975. It was expanded in 1987 to include adults in day care settings. CACFP provides federal reimbursements for meals served to children through age 12 (age 18 in some circumstances) who attend qualified family day care homes, child care centers, and community organizations that provide before or after school care. Reimbursements are also provided for meals served to chronically impaired adults or adults over age 60 attending approved adult care centers. The program is administered at the federal level by USDA and at the state level by DPI.

Value. Like the Summer Food Program, CACFP improves the nutritional health of children and vulnerable adults and strengthens the programs that serve them by adding a nutritional component to enrichment or supervisory activities. By serving as an incentive for child care providers to become regulated, CACFP contributes to improving the quality and affordability of available child care, especially in low-income areas. CACFP also improves attendance in after-school programs that reduce crime, teenage pregnancy, and drug and alcohol abuse while improving student academic performance.

Eligibility. Family day care homes are eligible to receive federal reimbursements if they're affiliated with an approved sponsoring organization (there are 8 in Wisconsin), and are licensed, certified or approved family day care homes. Reimbursement rates are based on several factors, including location in an economically distressed area, and the income level of the provider or family. Children through age 12 may participate.

Child care centers are eligible to participate in CACFP if they are licensed or approved child care centers, or are community organizations that provide organized child care programs for school children during off-school hours (including Head Start). Any child up to age 12 may participate. Reimbursement rates are based on the household income of the participants and match those for the School Lunch Program (free, reduced-price, and paid). After-school programs located in economically distressed areas may serve snacks to children through age 18 without collecting income information.

Adult day care centers are eligible if they are public or private non-profit centers that provide nonresidential adult day care to functionally impaired adults or to persons age 60 or over. (Private for-profit centers may participate if at least 25% of their enrolled adults are Title XIX (Medical Assistance) or Title XX beneficiaries). Centers must be licensed or approved facilities.

Participation. The average daily attendance in participating family day care homes in October 1999 was 22,303 children – essentially unchanged from 2 years earlier. However the number of participating day care homes has declined. In 96/97 there were 5,433 family day care homes participating in CACFP. That year Congress introduced a tiered reimbursement system that reduced payments for about 30% of day care homes. The resulting drop in reimbursement amounts caused numerous providers to leave the program. By 98/99 the number of participating homes had dropped 28% to 3,901, but recently rebounded to 4,751 homes in 99/00.

In October 1999 there were 51,253 children receiving meals and snacks at participating child care centers, 27,680 of who were low-income (54%). This is a 21% increase in the number of low-income children eating meals at centers compared with October 1996. Meals were provided at 951 sites throughout the state (99/00).

In October 1999 the average daily attendance in 18 participating Adult Day Care Centers was 950 adults.

Reimbursements. In 99/00 family day care homes participating in CACFP served 14.3 million meals and snacks to children in their care - a 2% increase over 98/99. Day care homes participating in CACFP received \$12.5 million in federal reimbursements – an increase of 4% over the previous year, but more than a 10% decrease from 96/97 when Congress implemented the tiered reimbursement rules. The 8 sponsoring agencies that administer payments to family day care homes received \$2.4 million.

In 99/00, child care centers participating in CACFP served 17.2 million meals to children – of which 9.1 million (53%) were served to needy children. Centers received federal reimbursements worth \$13.2 million dollars, an increase of 13% over 98/99. This included payments to after-school programs.

In 99/00, adult care centers provided 255,075 meals to participants and received \$226,680 in federal reimbursements.

Combined federal reimbursement for CACFP in all program types totaled \$28.3 million in 99/00.

THE NUTRITIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM FOR THE ELDERLY

The Nutritional Improvement Program for the Elderly was enacted in 1973 by the state legislature and amended in 1990. Under the program any school district approved by DPI may provide the opportunity for elderly residents and their

spouses to participate in its School Lunch Program. A school board which operates a Nutritional Improvement Program for the Elderly must make food service facilities available to elderly persons at every high school and middle school in the district that provides hot food service to students. A school board may provide meals in elementary schools if they wish. The legislation also gives universities, colleges and technical colleges the opportunity to participate. The program is operated at the state level by the DPI.

Eligibility. Elderly persons who are age 60 or older and their spouses may participate. Participants may be required to document their Wisconsin residency. There are no income criteria.

Participation. In 1999/00 there were 43 public and private school agencies that participated in the program. This is down from the 52 agencies that participated in 1996/97. Average daily participation was 2,388 persons, a 4% decrease from the 2,477 persons that participated each day during the 1996/97 school year.

Reimbursements. Schools may claim reimbursement for reasonable expenses incurred in operating the program, but capital equipment may not be reimbursed. The reimbursement rate is 15% of the cost of the meal or 50 cents per meal, whichever is less. Excess costs may be charged to participants. Food may be transported to elderly persons who are homebound, but state funds may not be used for delivery. In 99/00 public and private school agencies served 417,883 meals to elderly persons who participated in the program - a decrease from the 435,842 lunches served in 96/97. During 99/00 agencies received \$172,638 in state reimbursements a slight increase from the \$166,767 received in 96/97.

ELDERLY NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Established in 1965 the Elderly Nutrition Programs (ENP) provide seniors with low-cost, nutritious meals, nutrition education and opportunities for social interaction. ENP consists of 2 programs:

- *The Congregate Meals Program* provides meals for elderly persons at community locations
- *The Home Delivered Meals Program* is intended for seniors who cannot prepare their own meals or who cannot get to a Congregate Meal site due to illness, frailty or disability. It is also known locally as "Meals-On-Wheels".

Both programs are administered at the federal level by the Department of Health and Human Services and at the state level by DHFS. USDA also provides commodities and financial support under provisions of the Older Americans Act of 1965.

Eligibility. Persons age 60 and over and their spouses (regardless of age) are eligible to receive meals in either program. While there is no income limit, programs are targeted to areas where elderly persons have the greatest nutritional, economic or social need. Sites also provide nutrition screening, nutrition education, and nutrition assessment and counseling services.

Value. In addition to the benefit of meals, which provide 1/3 of the minimum daily nutrient requirement, ENP meals provide an important socialization opportunity for seniors who might otherwise be isolated. Especially in the case of home bound seniors who are unable to shop at grocery stores or eat in local restaurants, the program can be a life-saver. While there is no income criteria many seniors live on fixed incomes and have significant health-related expenses that may leave insufficient income to afford nutritious meals. ENP becomes even more vital in light of the fact that low-income seniors are often reluctant to utilize food stamps due to perceived stigma.

Participation. In 1999 the Congregate Meals Program served 2.8 million meals to an estimated 70,000 persons at 600 community sites. This is a drop of 15% from the number of meals served in 1995. The Home-Delivered Meals Program provided 2.6 million meals in 1999 to an estimated 20,000 home-bound seniors, an increase of 10% over meals served in 1995. In total, Wisconsin's Elderly Nutrition Programs served 5.4 million meals to an estimated 90,000 Wisconsin seniors in 1999, a drop of 4% from the 5.6 million meals served in 1995.

The Office on Aging reports a steady shift in the demand for meal services over the past 15 years. In 1986, 80 percent of all meals were served at senior centers and other community sites through the Congregate Meal Program. Today, only 52 percent of meals are served in a congregate setting due to increased demand for meals to be delivered to homebound persons.

Reimbursements. Local ENP agencies receive reimbursements for meals served that meet USDA meal standards. Federal and state funds granted to Wisconsin's Elderly Nutrition Programs in 1999 totaled \$13.5 million. The state GPR contribution accounted for nearly 40 percent of these funds. In addition to federal and state grants, local program budgets may be supplemented with other sources including participant donations, USDA meal reimbursement (\$.54 per meal), and/or local county funding. Until recently sites could receive food stamp vouchers from program participants who wanted to make a voluntary contribution, but the recent conversion to EBT has effectively eliminated the capacity of sites to receive food stamp contributions.

2. SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD PROGRAMS

Food Pantries

Soup Kitchens

Food Banks

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

Despite the variety of resources available through the federal nutrition programs many low-income families utilize community-based emergency food providers like food pantries and soup kitchens, and indirectly depend on the food banking networks that supply them. The reasons are varied: families may be unaware they are eligible for federal programs; they may not want government assistance; they may feel participation in government programs is stigmatizing; they may find the application process burdensome; working families may be unable to get to appointments; or they simply may not be eligible.

In other instances families that do participate in federal programs discover the benefits are insufficient to meet their monthly food needs and have to seek additional assistance. The Community Childhood Hunger Identification Project (CCHIP) reported in 1995 that 43% of food stamp recipients, one third of WIC participants and 30% to 45% of children enrolled in school meal programs also use emergency food providers. A recent Second Harvest survey⁶ of 403 clients who use emergency food programs in Wisconsin found that financial resources run out before the end of the month in 4 out of 5 participating food stamp households.

People readily turn to emergency food providers in part because eligibility criteria are minimal and they can receive immediate food assistance with few questions asked in friendly, informal environments. Unfortunately, emergency food organizations had intended to provide short-term crisis assistance, and not ongoing supplemental food assistance.

FOOD PANTRIES

Food pantries are community-based organizations that distribute canned goods, dry goods, produce and meat at no charge to low-income families that don't have sufficient money to meet their monthly food needs. Pantries obtain food through donations from food warehouses & wholesalers, food retailers, individuals, or by purchasing it from grocery stores or food banks. Some distribute non-food items. Pantries typically depend on volunteers and are frequently attached to churches

⁶ *Hunger: The Faces and Facts*, Second Harvest Food Bank of Wisconsin, 1998.

& synagogues, neighborhood centers, Community Action Agencies, social service agencies, and other anti-poverty community-based organizations.

While the exact number of food pantries in Wisconsin is unknown, a 1995 survey conducted by UW-Madison Nutritional Sciences identified approximately 840 food pantries. The Wisconsin Community Action Program Association (WISCAP) maintains a statewide food pantry database that currently lists over 500 pantries. It is estimated there may be between 650 and 750 providers.

Pantry Profile. The Second Harvest 1997 Report: *Hunger: The Faces and Facts* describes a typical pantry as church-affiliated, privately funded, with a median number of 10 volunteers, many of whom are elderly, who provide 416 hours of work annually. The average number of paid staff is 1.3, but most have no paid staff. The average pantry operates on \$7,867 in financial resources. WISCAP data indicates the average pantry serves 430 people each month.

Pantries vary in the type of services they offer with the majority providing only emergency food assistance. A smaller number however are multi-service organizations like Community Action Agencies, St. Vincent de Pauls, Salvation Armies or larger church-based programs that directly provide a variety of low-income services or act as referral points to other programs that could provide additional resources.

Eligibility. Client income eligibility criteria varies widely among pantries ranging from those with specific income limits to ones that require only a simple declaration of need. Food pantries that receive federal commodities for instance, assist persons with income at or below 150% of poverty, while others set lower limits - such as 100% of poverty. Many have missions to serve anyone who asks for assistance regardless of income.

Although pantries often require that clients reside in a particular county or region, the majority are open to the general public that live in their defined service areas. Some restrict their services further, such as serving only those who belong to their organization or church, or who are employed. There are some special purpose pantries that serve specific populations like homebound elderly or disabled, recently incarcerated people, or members of a certain ethnic group like Hmong or Hispanic.

Generally, families seeking assistance contact the food pantry directly, but some, especially in urban areas, may require clients to call a central referring agency (First Call For Help in Dane County or Food Line in Milwaukee) which directs them to an appropriate pantry. Central referring agencies provide excellent opportunities to learn more about clients' needs and link them with additional services they may require.

Allocations and Frequency of Service. Pantries typically provide a 2-3 day supply of food per person, adjusting the amount to the number of people in the household. But package size does vary widely and is naturally affected by how much food the pantry has in stock. Rural pantries, which have fewer resources for food and money, are especially vulnerable to short supplies.

Pantries most often serve clients once a month for an indefinite period, but even here there is considerable variation. Some provide assistance weekly for a several month period then discontinue services for most clients. Some restrict access to a certain number of times a year or over a three month period. Some pantries have return policies that encourage clients to come back during the same month if they need additional assistance, but others do not permit this. If families require more assistance, but are prohibited from returning to their primary food pantry, they may have to go to a second or third pantry. Sometimes this is done because of the great variation in the quality, variety and type of food that pantries offer and clients are unable to meet all their needs from one particular pantry.

Fixed Packages vs. Choice. While the majority of pantries pre-package food, an increasing number are allowing clients to choose the food they want. "Client Choice" increases the dignity of recipients by respecting their desires and giving them control, and decreases food waste because only desired food is taken. There are many models for implementing client choice depending on the available space of the pantry and the degree of choice offered to clients. Most establish guidelines on how much clients can take from each food category, but some operate as open stores allowing families to take as much as they need.

Referrals. The extent of referrals that food pantries make to other support programs varies widely. While many distribute occasional brochures along with food packages, only a minority of pantries, usually larger multi-purpose agencies, conduct in-depth intake interviews that allow them to better understand their client's needs and make appropriate referrals. These agencies may provide access to or information about other food assistance programs, housing and energy assistance, job training, business start-ups, transportation assistance, economic assistance, child care, health care, child support, clothing centers, domestic abuse prevention, mental health and AODA services. In fact, a few pantries require clients who need on-going food assistance to meet with social service agencies to determine eligibility for additional services, before allowing them to receive further food assistance.

Support of Local Food Pantries. Food pantries obtain food from local food drives, food banks, and local food purchases. Local retail grocery stores also provide important sources of support for food pantry networks:

- Copps Food Stores designed the *Sack Hunger* campaign to give customers an opportunity to buy pre-packaged bags of food containing items that local pantries need. The program is available in many communities throughout the state and to date has provided over 53,000 bags of food worth over \$334,000.

- Sentry Foods has recently expanded their *Round Up For Hunger* campaign to additional counties. The program gives customers the opportunity during checkout to round their bill up to the next whole dollar - with the additional amount going to local pantries.
- Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee coordinates an annual food donation drive through grocery stores in several southeastern Wisconsin counties, which benefit local food pantries. These drives generate tens of thousands of pounds annually.

A recent statewide effort involved the *Deer Donation 2000 Program*, which provided venison to local food pantries with help from local hunters and over 150 meat processors in 59 participating counties. This year the cost of processing the meat was paid if hunters donated the entire deer. Approximately \$500,000 was available for administrative and processing costs. The program was a cooperative effort involving county, state and federal agencies and hunter's groups, including the DNR, Hunters Against Hunger, Hunt for the Hungry, and counties enrolled in Wisconsin's Wildlife Damage Abatement and Claims Program, as well as USDA Wildlife Services.

Pantry Usage. It is well known that low-income households often use their limited resources to pay non-flexible bills first (housing, transportation, utilities), which in turn may not leave enough for food purchases. When households prioritize their resources in this way they convert their general economic insufficiency into food insufficiency. For this reason food pantry usage is a sensitive barometer of the overall financial well-being of vulnerable families.

- Miller Brewing conducted a survey of pantries in 1996 and 1997 for their report: "Fighting Hunger in Wisconsin", that found a 24% average increase in pantry demand in 1997 over 1996.
- 130 food pantries in 56 counties responding to a recent WISCAP survey reported an average increase of 9% in the number of persons served in September 1999 compared to September 1998. Demand in September 2000 was constant.
- Portage County Social Services reported the number of households requesting emergency food between 1995 and 2000 more than doubled from 880 households to 1921.
- The Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee reported the average number of persons served each month in Milwaukee increased 30% between 1996 and 1999. They recently reported that the number of emergency requests for food increased 15.5% between 1998 and 1999.

Client Profiles. Several surveys have been conducted of pantry clientele in Wisconsin that give us glimpses into who is using food pantries. UW Extension surveyed nearly 4,000 clients in 27 counties during October 1999. The results showed that:

- Almost three quarters are female (73%).
- 43% of households have children.
- One third are single parent households (usually single mothers).
- The ability to work may be a problem for more than half due to age (19% elderly) or disability (35% of non-elderly adults had a disability or health problem).
- About 1/3 have some earned income but most clients are paid low wages (83% were paid less than \$8/hour).
- 44% of households had earned income.
- Many people are not currently employed (2/3) and the majority of these have not worked in the last year.
- Pantries serve very low-income clients – 75% report income below \$1000/month.
- Although the vast majority of clients appear to be income eligible for food stamps, only 17% receive them.
- Pantry use varies widely. During the previous year 18% of clients reported they used pantries infrequently (1 time); 21% used them occasionally (2-3 times); and 27% used pantries regularly (10 times or more). Frequent pantry use was more common among elderly than working age.

SOUP KITCHENS

Soup kitchens, like food pantries, are non-profit community-based organizations that provide free emergency meals to needy individuals and families. Sites serve ready-to-eat meals to walk-in clients, usually without requiring identification or determining income eligibility. A network of domestic violence shelters and homeless shelters also provide prepared meals to their residents. Limited data is available on the exact number of soup kitchens and shelters in Wisconsin. However, there are 40 soup kitchens and 20 shelters statewide that receive donations of federal commodities through The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) network.

Like food pantries, soup kitchens obtain food through donations from individuals, community organizations and/or companies or they purchase it directly from grocery stores or food banks.

Soup Kitchen Profile. A typical soup kitchen is church-affiliated, privately funded, with a median number of 25 volunteers, many of who are elderly, and who donate 1,012 hours of work annually. The average number of paid staff at soup kitchens is 2.5, but many have no paid staff. Most prepare and serve meals on-site. Agencies operate on an average income of \$10,926.

Client Profiles. Data from the 1997 National Report: *Hunger: The Faces and Facts* by Second Harvest indicates that soup kitchen clients compared to food pantry clients are:

- Twice as likely to be male (60% vs. 31%);
- Twice as likely to have no income at all (16% vs. 8%);
- Somewhat more likely to be unemployed than pantry clients (41% to 36%);
- Slightly poorer than pantry clients (72% earn less than \$10,000 a year vs. 68%);
- Receiving food stamps less often than pantry clients (36% to 42%);
- More often employed as unskilled workers (36% vs. 19%), but less likely to be a service worker (9% vs. 30%); and
- More often cite personal problems as a reason for seeking aid (14% to 6%).

Discussions with meal program coordinators in Dane County reveal that mental illness, and addictions are issues for a significant number of soup kitchen clients. However, these organizations also report serving an increasing number of households with children.

Soup Kitchen Usage. Like food pantries there is limited information available on the number of persons served or meals distributed by soup kitchens in Wisconsin. Soup kitchens and shelters receiving federal commodities do report monthly meal counts to DHFS. Data for FY 00 indicates that 1.4 million meals were served to low-income households and individuals.

FOOD BANKS

Food banks are non-profit community-based organizations that collect donated food directly from food processors, wholesalers, retail grocers, farmers and corporations and distribute it to emergency food providers who directly serve needy families. There are generally 2 types: Second Harvest Food Banks and Independent Food Banks.

Second Harvest is the nation's largest network of food banks serving 50,000 charitable organizations, including 34,000 food pantries. Their annual food distribution exceeds 1 billion pounds. Second Harvest does not charge for distributing donated food, but does charge local organizations 14 cents/pound to cover administrative overhead. Some also maintain special funds to assist local organizations that cannot afford to pay. Some charge annual membership fees that may be used against later food purchases. Second Harvest requires participating pantries to meet certain standards pertaining to storage, refrigeration, non-discrimination and other issues that have helped to raise the quality of food pantries in Wisconsin.

Five Second Harvest Food Banks serve portions of Wisconsin:

- America's Second Harvest Food Bank of Wisconsin, located in Milwaukee, serves 36 Wisconsin counties.
- The Second Harvest Food Bank of Southern Wisconsin, located in Madison, serves 260 local pantries and charities in 17 counties.
- The Second Harvest Food Bank of St. Paul, located in St. Paul, serves 17 food pantries and local charities in northwestern Wisconsin.
- The Northern Lakes Food Bank, located in Duluth, serves agencies in 2 counties in northern Wisconsin.
- Feed My People Food Banks is a subsidiary distribution organization associated with Second Harvest Food Bank of St. Paul. Located in Eau Claire they serve 13 counties in west central Wisconsin.

Independent Food Banks are not associated with the Second Harvest network and distribute food free to pantries in their service areas, using other funding sources to cover their administrative expenses. There is no central registry or definition of independent food banks, but counting agencies in the TEFAP network and other independents there are approximately 15-17 non-Second Harvest food banks statewide. For example, the Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee (HTFM) provides donated food and food purchased in bulk to area emergency feeding organizations (EFOs) and coordinates a network of approximately 100 EFOs in metropolitan Milwaukee.

Some pantries rely heavily on distributions from food banks, while others obtain most or all of their food from other sources, such as individual donations, food drives, local grocery stores or food distributors. Forty percent of emergency food providers responding to a recent Second Harvest survey indicated food bank distributions were their primary source of food. "Fighting Hunger in Wisconsin" reported the largest source of food for pantries that responded to their survey were individual donations and local food drives. In either case food banks represent the largest organizational source of donated food for emergency food providers. However, food banks still distribute less than half of all food distributed by emergency food pantries.

Food Bank Distributions. Combining information from the Legislative Audit Bureau with data from other sources, food banks distributed over 17 million pounds of food to pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, and other charitable organizations in Wisconsin in 1999. This is roughly the equivalent of \$17 million dollars in food assistance – more than twice the size of the School Breakfast Program. If this figure is combined with food raised by food pantries from private donations and direct food purchases from retail grocers the total amount of emergency food in the network could exceed 60 million pounds annually.

	1999	% Change
Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee	2.2 million lbs.	83% from 1997
America's Second Harvest of WI	10.7 million lbs.	16% from 1996/97
Second Harvest Food Bank of Southern WI	2.3 million lbs.	35% from 1998
Second Harvest Food Bank of St. Paul	732,078 lbs.	49% from 1997
Feed My People	400,000 lbs.	unavailable
Northern Lakes Food Bank	40,678 lbs.	unavailable
Wisconsin Harvest	1 million lbs.	Unchanged from 1998.
TOTAL	17.3 million lbs.	

Gleaning/Food Recovery. While not all excess food is edible for humans, much is if properly recovered. Food banks and food pantries have increased their efforts to salvage wholesome, unspoiled perishable food for use by emergency feeding programs. *Food recovery* generally refers to all efforts to recover prepared and perishable food for food assistance programs and includes (1) collecting fresh produce from fields, warehouses, grocers, and farmers markets; and (2) collecting prepared food from restaurants, caterers, hospitals, cafeterias, and special events. *Gleaning* refers to the specific practice of collecting produce from fields or collecting already harvested food at packing sheds or warehouses.

USDA has placed an emphasis on increasing the number of gleaning and food recovery operations throughout the United States to reduce levels of food waste and where appropriate feed food insecure people.

THE EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TEFAP)

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is a federal program that distributes commodities to low-income people through participating food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters. The program is administered by USDA at the federal level and DHFS at the state level.

Value. TEFAP provides an important source of food assistance for low-income families experiencing acute or chronic food insecurity and helps to stabilize the supply of donated food distributed through pantries and soup kitchens. Because of state and federal standards governing participating organizations TEFAP has been a positive force in improving the quality of Wisconsin's food pantry network.

Eligibility. In Wisconsin persons with income at or below 150% of poverty are eligible to receive commodities at participating food pantries. There is no income eligibility for persons who voluntarily seek meals at soup kitchens or homeless shelters. In FFY 2000, participating pantries provided food assistance to 350,000 persons (duplicated), and participating soup kitchens and shelters served 1.4 million meals to low-income people.

Funding. Congress currently allocates \$100 million annually for the purchase of food through the federal price-support program and other sources. These funds are allocated to each state based on a formula using the current weighted poverty and unemployment index. DHFS then reallocates commodities to Emergency Feeding Organizations (EFOs) based equally on the number of people below poverty and the number of unemployed people in each county.

Distribution. In FFY 2000 Wisconsin's TEFAP network distributed over 4.3 million pounds of nutritious meats, produce, fruits, grains, cereals, and other products valued at \$2.8 million. In order to ensure a more effective and comprehensive statewide system DHFS contracted with 14 Community Action Agencies, the Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee and Menominee Indian Tribe to administer TEFAP in all 72 counties. These agencies coordinate local distribution through 185 food pantries, 40 soup kitchens and 30 shelters.

Standards of Excellence. Emergency Feeding Organizations (EFOs) that provide local coordination must submit annual access plans that maximize availability of food; limit potential for duplication of services; assure emergency access to food; ensure nutritionally balanced food packages; match TEFAP foods with food from non-USDA sources; and provide some level of client referral. These standards have improved the quality of emergency food services while leveraging thousands of pounds of food from the private sector.

TEFAP Advisory Council. In 2000, DHFS created the TEFAP Advisory Council, with representatives from all EFOs, to act as a program advisory and working committee. The Council will enhance communication between state and local agencies and provide an opportunity to discuss policies, procedures and issues with the goal of enhancing program effectiveness.

3. FOOD PRODUCTION AND MARKETING

- Community Gardens
- Community-Supported Agriculture
- Farmers Markets
- Kitchen Incubators
- Food Buying Cooperatives
- Retail Grocery Stores

While low-income people receive important assistance from federal food programs and community-based emergency food networks, broad-based food security means providing more opportunities for people to grow their own food and where feasible to market food they grow - activities which increase self-reliance and generate income.

It is equally important that low-income families, whether they garden or not, have more opportunities to purchase food through non-emergency channels including alternate retail markets like CSAs, farmers markets and food buying cooperatives, as well as improved access to quality, affordable food through retail grocery stores.

COMMUNITY GARDENS

Community gardening had its roots in the victory gardens of WW II that were developed to supplement local agricultural production when much of the farm labor force was overseas. This eventually gave rise to the American Community Gardening Association, which became a consolidating force for urban horticulture. Wisconsin Cooperative Extension established its first community garden in 1973 on Milwaukee County grounds - a location that now has over 1,000 rental plots - 60% tended by low-income families.

There are many types of community gardens, ranging from gardens that support food pantries, shelters, and elderly meal programs, to rental gardens, youth gardens, school gardens, as well as gardens located at nursing homes, senior housing complexes, and community centers.

Value. The value of community gardens is readily found in a variety of economic, social, environmental, aesthetic and recreational considerations that benefit both the individual and broader community.

- *The Evaluation of Community Gardens (1998)* conducted for UW Extension found that gardeners, especially rental gardeners, reported they saved an average of \$168 on food - 20% reported saving as much as \$300.
- According to the UW Extension evaluation, gardeners reported eating more vegetables and a more balanced diet than their non-gardening peers.
- Many gardeners report that the gardens become social hubs in the neighborhood and provide them with important opportunities to share food, company, labor, knowledge, and cultural traditions.
- Many gardeners report that the recreational aspect of gardening is one of its most valued features.
- Some gardens provide growers with sufficient produce to market through farmers markets or farm stands, thus providing a supplemental source of income.
- Youth and school gardens provide opportunities to learn academic subjects, increase environmental awareness and build self-esteem, while reducing delinquent behaviors. Some youth gardens, such as the Youth Market Garden in Madison, provide economic rewards for children. Children learn gardening, cash-handling, and accounting skills and are able to take home a portion of the total sales from marketed produce.
- Gardens reflect the increasingly recognized principles of sustainable agriculture with their emphasis on developing local sources of food.

Availability. There are no central records of the number of community gardens in Wisconsin, but UW Extension recently conducted a survey of all 72 counties to identify the number of gardens known to Extension staff. This informal survey identified 133 community gardens in 29 counties. These included community gardens, rental gardens, youth gardens, school gardens, and gardens attached to residential care facilities, food pantries, shelters and other community organizations. The Extension survey suggests 40% of Wisconsin's counties have at least 1 community garden, although the number of tillable acres per person in each county varies widely.

There is no comprehensive list identifying these gardens by name, location, type, acreage, number of plots or number of persons served. The above information may not include gardens maintained at correctional facilities or those rented privately from local farmers.

The Millennium Project. In January 2000, a White House Initiative called the Millennium project began to encourage state and local projects involving reforestation, expansion of green space and development of gardens. In Wisconsin, the Initiative is coordinated through an alliance of USDA agencies that include UW Extension, Farm Service Agency, Rural Development and Natural Resources Conservation Service, where it is known as PROJECT FEEDS

(Food & Ecosystem Education Demonstration Sites). The Project seeks to establish 30 new community gardens throughout Wisconsin. The Project will:

- Develop a web-based clearinghouse where organizations can learn about the different types of community gardens and how to establish them, including information on statewide demonstration sites;
- Establish 3 types of demonstration gardens at multiple locations around the state: school gardens, health care facility gardens, and senior housing gardens, where interested agencies can go to learn about each type;
- Provide a set of donated gardening supplies to organizations that are establishing a garden. Materials include seeds, gloves, hoe, water sprayers, shears, fertilizer, and 8-10 additional items.

Community Food Security. Closely related to increasing community gardens is the concept of Community Food Security. While traditional hunger advocates focus on the infrastructure and programs needed to ensure access to food by low-income persons, the emerging Community Food Security movement (CFS) defines food security in terms of the entire food system infrastructure, and emphasizes building community institutions to ensure access and availability of food for community residents. CFS seeks to ensure food security for people at all income levels by developing a food system based on local production, community development and empowerment.

While hunger prevention issues are inherent in Community Food Security, concern extends further to environmental impact, organic farming, economic development, sustainable agriculture, transportation, access to food, small farms, linking producers and consumers, nutrition and consumer education, land use issues, farm-land preservation, and increasing production and consumption of locally grown food. The involvement of CFS advocates further diversifies the types of organizations involved in hunger issues, with a particular emphasis on agriculture, farmers, Urban and Regional Planning departments, Urban Agriculture, and Rural Development.

USDA administers the Community Food Security Grants to provide funding to local projects that embody these principles. Projects must increase the supply of nutritious food, support locally produced food, improve low-income access to food and enhance self-sufficiency through entrepreneurial activity or economic development.

COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE (CSA)

The concept behind Community Supported Agriculture is both simple and fundamental – local produce farmers and community members (consumers) enter into direct relationships whereby consumers support a farm and share the farmers risk by buying shares of the harvest prior to planting. These shares,

which typically cost between \$350 and \$450, provide the farmers with capital when they most need it and guarantee a market for their produce. Consumers, in turn receive a weekly supply of fresh, local, organically grown produce throughout the growing season. Consumers accept the risks of variable harvests as well as the benefits of overabundant harvests, which helps to stabilize the farmer's income across all types of growing seasons. Many CSA farms also provide opportunities for members to plant, tend and harvest crops, further increasing the community's connection to the land and its stake in local food production. Membership in a CSA also tends to increase the amount and variety of produce that households consume with corresponding nutritional benefits for participating households.

The CSA movement, which began in the United States in 1986 with two farms in New Hampshire and Massachusetts, has grown to over 600 farms and gardens nationwide. Wisconsin has a particularly large number of CSA farms – about 53 according to the 1997 CSA Regional Directory.

By directly linking consumers to local farmers CSAs represent a fundamental change in the way people obtain their food. Unfortunately several aspects of CSAs make it difficult for low-income households to participate: (1) the comparatively high cost of a CSA share and (2) the requirement that the share is paid up front before the growing season for produce that will be delivered over the ensuing 4-5 month season.

Partner Shares is a community-based organization in Dane County that was established in 1997 to help remedy these problems. They accomplish this by paying the full cost of the share up front on behalf of low-income members, who in turn pay 30% of the cost of the share (about \$120), in monthly installments over the growing season. Partner Shares subsidizes the remaining 70% of the share cost with community funds. Partner Shares also provides subsidized shares to community organizations that serve low-income people such as shelters and community supported living arrangements.

In 1999 Partner Shares supported access to fresh locally grown produce for about 1,000 people in 6 community organizations and 18 households. This is the equivalent of 21.5 full shares worth over \$8,000. The program enables low-income families to gain access to high quality food through non-emergency channels and does it through a partnership between the community and the participants.

FARMERS MARKETS

Farmers markets provide an opportunity for local family farmers, who themselves often live on limited incomes, to market their produce directly to consumers. With the exception of Watertown Market and Fondy Market in

Milwaukee, which are year-round enclosed facilities, all are seasonal, mostly open-air markets.

The USDA's Agriculture Marketing Services listed 147 farmers markets in 123 separate communities during the summer of 2000. This is an increase of 20% over the 123 farmers markets the USDA listed in their national resource guide in 1998.

Low-Income Access. There is little data on the availability of farmers markets in low-income communities throughout the state. The Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee, during their recent Food System Assessment Study (FSAS), discovered a lack of fresh, high quality produce in small inner city grocery stores and an insufficient number of farmers markets serving low-income sectors of the city. With assistance from a state funded Community-Based Hunger Prevention Grant the Milwaukee Farmers' Market Association (MFMA) was formed. In 1999 MFMA established 4 new farmers markets and identified 25 new vendors. The Association has improved the economic health of farmers' and public markets in the inner city and increased low-income access to fresh produce.

WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP). The WIC Farmers Market Program (WFMP) started in 1995 to increase consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables by low-income WIC participants and increase sales of Wisconsin grown produce at local farmers markets across the state. The program was initiated in 1995 in just 3 Wisconsin counties (Milwaukee, Dane and Eau Claire) and 10 markets. By 1999 FMNP had expanded to 12 counties and 43 markets, then increased to 21 counties and 72 markets by summer 2000. As a result of program expansion, participation increased 68% between 1995 and 2000 when the number of recipients went from 44,685 to over 75,000 people. Individual households received vouchers worth \$20. 62% of these coupons were redeemed.

WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program				
Year	# Individuals	# Counties	# Farmers	# Markets
1995	44685	3	120	10
1996	43329	3	146	13
1997	55557	3	142	15
1998	53468	5	206	23
1999	64986	12	301	43
2000	75292	21	419	72

The financial benefits to farmers, who often live on low level incomes, have also been significant. Between 1995 and 2000 the number of participating farmers increased from 120 to 419 and the number of local markets and farmstands increased from 10 to 72. During this period the value of market vouchers increased from \$310,000 to \$602,000.

In FFY 00, FMNP received \$756,256 in federal and state funding. Wisconsin GPR accounted for 30% of the total.

Farmers Market Food Stamp Pilot. The recent transition from paper vouchers to the electronic Quest Card as the delivery system for food stamp benefits has had a positive impact overall on the food stamp program. In particular, the use of the Quest Card all but eliminates the stigma attached to food stamp usage. However, it has been problematic to make the EBT card work at farmers markets because of a frequent lack of power and phone lines. Vendors must use a manual voucher process, which is time-consuming and may cause them to lose business while they are completing it. DWD has committed to at least 1 and possibly 2 food stamp farmers market pilot projects during 2001. Delivery systems might include use of a kiosk at the market to transfer benefits from the Quest Card to small denomination paper vouchers redeemable by market vendors, and exploration of wireless Point-Of-Sale technology that would enable the Quest Card to be used in the same fashion as grocery store transactions. The USDA is also making \$6 million available in competitive grants to states to implement pilot projects to increase access by food stamp recipients to farmers markets.

KITCHEN INCUBATORS

A shared-use commercial kitchen is a type of business incubator where caterers, street vendors, farmers, gardeners, and producers of specialty food items can prepare their food products in a fully licensed and certified kitchen. They are especially well suited to entrepreneurs with limited resources who want to begin or expand a food product business but can't afford to set up their own commercial kitchen and office. Kitchen incubators, often sponsored by an umbrella non-profit organization or existing business incubator, provide the opportunity to explore food production without the high cost of building and equipping individual kitchens.

Kitchen incubators typically contain commercial-grade stainless steel equipment such as convection ovens; mixers, food processors, proofing cabinets, prep tables, and canning kettles. They may also provide coolers, walk-in freezers, dry storage, loading docks, and other amenities. Kitchen incubators also offer important technical assistance in food production as well as office space and support services, general business management skills, networking opportunities with other entrepreneurs, and the opportunity to form shared service cooperatives for marketing, distribution and supply purchasing. Some provide assistance with marketing research, label design and other specialty services. Increasingly kitchen incubators are providing an important avenue for limited resource farmers, gardeners, and other entrepreneurs to establish food-based businesses.

UW-Madison Center for Cooperatives, UW Extension and USDA Rural Development recently established the Wisconsin Kitchen Incubator Network to enhance information sharing and technical assistance among developing projects. The Network's website at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/agmarkets/kitchdir.html> currently documents 9 Kitchen Incubator Projects in various stages of development across the state. These include sites in Ashland, La Crosse, Algoma, Milwaukee, Lac du Flambeau, Madison, Menominee, Monona, and Superior.

FOOD BUYING COOPERATIVES

When groups coordinate common purchases they can realize significant volume discounts over retail prices. "Food buying clubs or cooperatives" apply these principles to food purchasing on both large and small scales. These cooperatives range in size from informal groups ordering specialized foods to huge national non-profit organizations like SHARE that are capable of leveraging the purchasing power of hundreds of thousands of members. There are no income criteria to participate. The largest group belonging to buying clubs are elderly persons living on fixed incomes.

SHARE. The Self-Help And Resource Exchange (SHARE) is the largest non-profit food buying club in the U.S. and serves customers in 65 Wisconsin counties. SHARE seeks to promote volunteer service and community connections while helping households save money on food. SHARE offers several food purchasing options available to anyone, regardless of income, who volunteers 2 hours a month to a community or civic organization.

- **Standard Food Package.** Customers can purchase the traditional standard (fixed content) food package for \$14 in cash or food stamps which contains \$28-\$30 worth of food. The contents vary each month, but generally contains 4-8 lbs. of meat, poultry, and/or fish, a variety of fresh produce and canned or dry goods.
- **SHARE Select.** This entirely new option allows customers to choose which individual food items they want and in what quantities. People choose from among items found in the standard package as well as additional items.
- **Farm Fresh Wisconsin.** This is a fixed package of fresh produce, meat, cheese, herbs and other products that come from small Wisconsin family farms during the summer and from small farmers in the South during the winter. The package increases access to local and regional farm products, supports sustainable agriculture, and increases the economic viability of small farms.

Food is distributed through 280 "host" sites in Wisconsin, the U.P. and northern Illinois - slightly fewer than the 300 sites in 1996. Customers make their food selections on order forms that are returned to host sites or directly to SHARE. Several weeks later SHARE delivers the food to each host site, which builds food packages for customers to pick-up. Customers pay a small shipping and handling fee that averages about \$2/order. SHARE currently serves about 7,000 households each month.

Food Fair. Food Fair is an alternative buying club operated by the Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin, and serves Dane and Jefferson counties. Although similar in many respects to SHARE there is no volunteer requirement. Food Fair's primary volume is in sales of its standard (fixed) food package that sells for \$15 but contains \$30-35 worth of food. Some Food Fair sites offer a meat buying option that permits customers to select amounts and types of meats to purchase from an available list. A vegetarian food package is also offered. In 1999 Food Fair operated 25 sites in their two-county service area.

Fare For All. This program located in St. Paul serves 13 counties in northwestern Wisconsin and used to be a SHARE affiliate. They sell standard food packages for \$15 that contain about \$30 worth of retail food. There is no volunteer requirement.

Participation. In 1999 the three major food buying cooperatives in Wisconsin collectively sold 188,892 equivalent food packages to members in all 72 counties. This is a drop of 16% from 1998, and a decline of 19% from 1995. Overall declines may be due in part because their primary customers have traditionally been elderly persons on fixed incomes, and the coops haven't made strong inroads into other demographic groups.

	1995	1996	1998	1999	Percent Change 98 to 99	Percent Change 95 to 99
Fare For All	20,656	23,330	15,244	12,350		
Food Fair	6,182	4,821	8,366	8,934		
SHARE of Wisconsin	207,447	204,455	202,061	167,608		
TOTAL	234,285	232,606	225,671	188,892	16%	19%

Interestingly, SHARE of Wisconsin, faced with declining sales, researched and introduced the SHARE Select Option in May of 1999 after conducting focus groups with former customers. They are the only SHARE program in the nation that has implemented this design. As a result they have seen an increase in purchases - September 2000 sales were 28% higher than the previous year and their 2000 total is anticipated to be 15% higher than 1999. Two thirds of food orders are SHARE Select, which has increased average monthly purchases to \$31 per household. The number of items they offer has also increased from 15-18 items to over 30. By providing customers with greater variety, choice and control they have increased their viability.

Low-Income Access. Many low-income families, especially those using food pantries, could benefit from the savings that could be obtained from buying clubs, but generally have not participated in significant numbers. Studies have shown low-income households in large urban areas may pay 15-20% more for food than families living in the suburbs, in part because they buy in smaller quantities and shop at higher cost neighborhood stores. Food Fair has experimented with locating host sites in low-income areas in Madison, but has encountered mixed success. SHARE of Wisconsin has recently obtained a pilot grant to subsidize the participation of 50 low-income Racine families in the SHARE program. They are also conducting focus groups with Milwaukee residents to explore ways to expand participation in lower-income areas.

ACCESS TO RETAIL GROCERY STORES

Retail grocery stores are the primary source of food for most people and Americans are fortunate indeed that we generally have good access to quality, affordable food. Over the past few years the percentage of the household budget we spend on food has gradually decreased.

Food Stamps and WIC. Declines in Food Stamp and WIC enrollment have reduced access to food through retail grocery stores compared to levels attained in 1995. Today food stamps provide \$8 million fewer dollars each month for low-income families compared with 5 years ago. Improving the benefits and access to the food stamp program alone is the greatest single step that would improve access to food through non-emergency channels.

Nevertheless, despite these drops, food stamps and WIC jointly provide over \$15 million each month – about \$180 million annually - to low-income people to purchase food primarily through retail grocery stores – a significant and fundamental success that must be further built on.

Quality, Variety and Cost of Food. Despite these successes low-income residents in rural areas and inner cities, as well as limited income elderly and disabled persons – do not have the same access as their middle income, non-disadvantaged neighbors when it comes to access, quality, variety, and affordability of food. The Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee recently conducted a market basket study of Milwaukee as part of a multi-agency Food System Assessment Study (FSAS). The study examined the prices that consumers paid for 50 food items bought from stores of various sizes in different areas of Milwaukee. The items in the market basket were selected by nutritional science experts as necessary to meet the daily nutritional needs of children and adults in quantities sufficient for 2 adults and 2 children for one week. The report found that overall:

- The availability of food items was greater in larger stores than smaller ones;
- The quality of produce was generally high in medium stores (20-99 employees) and large stores (100 or more employees), while in micro-stores (4 or fewer employees) and small-sized stores (5-19 employees) wilted, damaged, and spoiled produce was not uncommon;
- Smaller stores charge higher prices for many individual food items than larger stores;
- The cost of the market basket was 24% higher in micro-sized stores (\$129) compared with the lowest price in the largest food outlet (\$104);
- 72% of all retail stores operating in high poverty areas of the inner city were micro-sized stores (66), whereas only 2 large and 6 medium-sized stores operated in the same area.

Solutions identified by the FSAS involved improving transportation links with suburban supermarkets; bringing more supermarkets into the inner city; establishing more farmers markets; and exploring development of a buying club for small convenience stores to increase volume discounts so that ultimately food quality and affordability would improve.

Although comparable studies in rural areas either have not been conducted or were unavailable it is generally reported that rural areas are underserved by supermarkets and have similar concerns regarding the quality and affordability of food sold by smaller retail stores.

According to the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation's latest Market Basket survey, the cost of food in Wisconsin increased one percent in 2000. The average price of the survey of 40 food items in 2000 increased 71 cents from \$70.17 in 1999 to \$70.88.

4. EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program (WNEP)
Other Education Programs

WISCONSIN NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM (WNEP)

The University of Wisconsin-Extension Nutrition Education Program (WNEP) responds to the diverse needs and resources of the poor by implementing community-based nutrition education programs. WNEP began with the introduction of the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) to Wisconsin in 1970. EFNEP is funded by the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service of USDA. WNEP further expanded over the past thirteen years with the introduction of the Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program (FSNEP) in 1986. FSNEP is a partnership between three agencies: the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of USDA, the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) and University of Wisconsin-Extension (UWEX).

Availability. In FFY 96 WNEP had programs operating in 44 counties, increasing to 49 counties in FFY 97. In FFY 00 WNEP operated as 36 projects in 54 counties.

Eligibility. The nutrition education programs funded by FSNEP are made available to food stamp eligible individuals and families in participating counties. Nutrition education programs funded by EFNEP, which operate in 6 counties, serve families with young children who enroll for a series of lessons on nutrition and food safety topics.

Participation. FSNEP educators made 286,215 educational contacts in FFY 00 - a 9% increase over FFY 99, and a 68% increase over FFY 95. Twenty-seven percent of all program participants were families with young children; 45% of the participants were school age youth; 16% were older adults; and 9% were single adults between the ages of 18 and 65 years. Slightly over half of participants were females (61%). Four percent of the individuals taught had a disability.

EFNEP funded programs served over 1600 families during the year.

Persons of many diverse cultural groups were reached by WNEP educators: 74% of participants were white, 11% African American, 7% Hispanic, 5% Asian, and 4% Native American.

Partnerships. During 1999-2000, WNEP provided community-based nutrition education programs in partnership with 757 agencies. Of these agencies, 320 (42%) were from the public sector, 257 (34%) were private non-profit, 111 (15%) were schools, 35 (5%) were from the private sector, and the remaining 34 (5%) represented other types of organizations. WNEP entered into 1,073 agreements with these agencies toward the common goal of providing nutrition education to food stamp-eligible individuals and families.

Educational Programs and Impact. Educational programs are offered in a variety of settings using several educational strategies: group sessions (64% of educational contacts), learn-while-you-wait (31% of educational contacts), lessons for individuals (3% of contacts), and other strategies (2% of contacts).

Dietary Quality – Choosing Healthful Food. Sixty-four percent of all educational contacts focused on lessons related to helping learners choose more healthful food for themselves and their families. Lessons on the Food Guide Pyramid and selected Dietary Guidelines were taught during 57% of the educational contacts while lessons on choosing nutritious food for family members across the life span, from infants to seniors were taught during 7% of the contacts.

- Ninety-two percent of the individuals who participated in a series of EFNEP lessons showed improvement in their consumption of at least one food group as a result of the lessons. Fifty-two percent of the participants reported that they more often thought about healthy food choices when deciding what to feed their families.
- Two interactive educational displays and a lesson plan were designed to help limited resource families understand how to buy more fruits and vegetables with their money. Twenty-seven WNEP projects used the display or lesson plan; 225 clients participated in planned lessons while 8,068 viewed the displays. After viewing the educational display, 7129 of the participants were asked if the display had helped them learn how to get more fruits and vegetables for their money; 83.9% of respondents answered “yes.” 932 learners were asked if they would use one or more of the ideas from the display the next time they bought fruits and vegetables; 97.5% of those who responded to this question said “yes.” Participants commented that they were pleased to learn that canned fruits and vegetables can be nutritious, affordable alternatives to frozen and fresh, and that they found the ideas helpful for increasing their fruit and vegetable intake.

Food Safety—Handling Food Safely. Food safety education is an integral part of the Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program (WNEP). The goal is to provide individuals with knowledge about safe food handling and storage practices so that they are better able to purchase, prepare and serve food that is safe to eat. Thirteen percent of the educational contacts made by WNEP educators during the year focused on safe food handling practices. Lessons

focused on handling food safely when buying, preparing, serving and/or storing food.

- Seventeen WNEP projects participated in a statewide evaluation project to assess the impact of their programming in food safety. Educators taught classes in safe food handling, preparation and storage. Overall, 4724 individuals across the state participated in these educational efforts. As a result of WNEP education efforts, 439 participants (31%) who participated in training on hand washing said they would wash their hands more thoroughly. When cross-contamination was the focus of educational efforts, 248 individuals (21%) said they would improve their food handling practices to prevent cross-contamination. After lessons on cooking, reheating, or cooling of food, 113 adults and seniors (16%) indicated they would adopt proper behaviors of cooking and reheating; while 198 adults and seniors (28%) will adopt safe practices for cooling leftovers. Also as a result of training, 120 young children and youth (23%) are more likely to wash fruits and vegetables before eating them; and 66 (16%) will keep shoes and backpacks off countertops and tables to avoid cross-contamination. The results of this evaluation indicate that educational efforts have been effective in increasing safe food handling, preparation and storage practices of WNEP participants, and thus may help decrease the risk for foodborne illnesses for this audience.
- As a result of participating in EFNEP lessons, 56% of the learners reported that they more often followed recommended practices for thawing food safely, and 34% said they were more often avoiding leaving perishable food sit at room temperature for more than two hours.

Food Resource Management – Enhancing Family Food Security. A major goal of the Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program is to help limited resource families become more food secure by teaching them the skills needed to track their spending, manage food dollars and plan nutritious meals for their families. Nineteen percent of all educational contacts focused on lessons related to helping learners better manage their food dollars and plan and buy food for their families. Lessons on managing food dollars were taught during 4% of the educational contacts; lessons on meal planning and food shopping were taught during 15% of the contacts.

- Nine WNEP projects used the Money for Food curriculum to teach food resource management to participants. The lessons were taught 294 times, to individuals or groups, for a total of 1352 educational contacts. Over 85% of the learners reported that they had learned something or would do something differently after the lessons. After participating in each lesson, learners were asked about a specific skill or behavior they learned or planned to adopt as a result of the learning activity. After a lesson on using food stamps and other programs to put together a food budget, 147 learners were asked if they had learned something that would make it easier for them to get enough food or money for food—86% of the respondents said “yes.” Following a lesson on wants and needs, 94% of the 46 participants could name a food “want” (as opposed to a “need”) that they would try to buy less often. After a practice

activity on developing a family spending plan, 92% of the 119 learners reported that they intended to try to use a spending plan for their families. Following a teaching activity about food shopping strategies, 100% of the 50 participants said they planned to use at least one new way to get more for their food dollars. After learning about choosing low cost foods based on the Food Guide Pyramid, 94% of the 150 participants could name a nutritious low cost food that they would buy for their family.

- As a result of participating in EFNEP lessons, 51% of the learners reported that they more often planned meals in advance, 45% said they more often compared prices when food shopping, and 46% reported that they more often used a list for grocery shopping.

OTHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council Family Nutrition Programs.

Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council (GLITC) administers the Family Nutrition Program at four Tribes in Wisconsin: Bad River, St. Croix, Lac du Flambeau and Red Cliff. The Family Nutrition Program is supported by in-kind contributions from participating tribes and Indian Health Service, in kind and cash from GLITC, and matching funds from the Food and Nutrition Service of USDA.

GLITC nutrition educators provided a variety of educational programs to 1463 learners during the first six months of FFY 00. Educational programs were offered in a variety of settings—small group lessons for elders and adults recovering from addictions, learn-while-you-wait programs, workshops for tribal employees at worksites, and brief lessons for WIC participants and persons receiving commodities from local food distribution sites.

Wisconsin Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). The Wisconsin WIC Program, administered by the Wisconsin Division of Public Health, provides supplemental foods, nutrition education, and referrals to at-risk pregnant women, postpartum women, infants, and children up to the age of 5 years. Eligibility is based on income guidelines and nutrition risk. Eligible participants are certified for 6 months (exceptions are infants who are certified to one year of age and pregnant women who are certified up to 6 weeks postpartum) and then eligibility is reassessed.

The two broad nutrition goals of the WIC Program are: 1) Stress the relationship between proper nutrition and good health with special emphasis on the nutritional needs of the WIC population; and 2) Assist the individual who is at nutritional risk in achieving a positive change in food habits, resulting in improved nutritional status and in the prevention of nutrition-related problems through optimal use of supplemental foods and other nutritious foods. More specific nutrition goals are:

- Women: Promote optimal prenatal weight gain, prevent anemia, improve birth weights, promote and support breastfeeding, and improve nutritional status prior to subsequent pregnancies.
- Infants and Children: Promote optimal feeding practices, prevent anemia, prevent growth problems such as failure to thrive and obesity, and improve the parent/child feeding relationship.

To address these goals, nutrition education is provided at enrollment into WIC and is offered to all participants at least once during the certification period. During enrollment, when individual nutritional needs are determined, one-to-one counseling is provided based on those needs. During the certification period, counseling is provided on an individual basis to higher risk participants, or in group settings or other ways to lower risk participants. The content may focus on nutrition topics (need to gain appropriate weight during pregnancy, importance of breastfeeding, etc.) or on methods to achieve an adequate diet (shopping wisely and economically, etc.). In addition to providing education, WIC also provides referrals to other health and social services including food resources such as food stamps and food pantries, and nutrition education services such as those provided by the University of Wisconsin's Nutrition Education Program (WNEP) and Medicaid's Prenatal Care Coordination Program.

Local WIC agencies collaborate with other community groups in order to assess the needs of the WIC population and to provide services that best address these needs. Many local WIC agencies participate in breastfeeding coalitions, anti-hunger coalitions, and education campaigns with UW-Extension and other partners.

Data from national WIC studies, Centers for Disease Control nutrition surveillance systems, and the Wisconsin WIC Program indicate that the WIC Program is successful in meeting nutritional goals.

Community Hunger Awareness Efforts. In addition to educating people with limited resources on nutrition, budgeting, and shopping, there is a need to increase general community awareness about hunger and food insecurity. Community awareness can increase resources, catalyze new initiatives, foster partnerships, increase food donations, deepen commitments and reduce stigma.

These community awareness efforts are carried out with local leadership from a variety of organizations, including Cooperative Extension staff, County Social Services, WIC agencies, Public Health, Community Action Agencies, USDA, School Food Services, SHARE, local businesses, farmers, churches, anti-hunger coalitions, emergency food providers, senior nutrition program staff, Head Start, and many others.

The recent Portage County Hunger Summit in Stevens Point, coordinated by Portage County Health and Human Services, was held to increase community awareness of hunger out of concern that food insecurity was increasing. The project involved diverse community partners, the media, schools, and included preparation of a video and a county-wide hunger conference to examine local research and explore ways of addressing hunger.

5. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

There are diverse anti-hunger organizations and providers at the local level that constitute Wisconsin's local food security infrastructure. These include organizations and providers already discussed at length, including County Human and Social Service agencies, Public Health and WIC agencies, Community Action Agencies, Area Aging Agencies, School Food Service providers, Tribal governments, Cooperative Extension, USDA agencies (FSA, Rural Development, Food and Nutrition), local businesses, churches, food pantries, soup kitchens, food banks, poverty relief agencies (St. Vincent de Paul, Salvation Army), Head Start, homeless shelters, community gardening and greenspace networks, and other community-based organizations that serve low-income families.

Despite the many people in a community involved in different aspects of hunger prevention and food security, there is often minimal contact between providers, limited coordination efforts, and incomplete knowledge of complementary services.

Community Hunger Prevention Councils. Local hunger prevention councils can enhance communication and partnerships among diverse organizations and can undertake a broader range of initiatives than individual agencies. A recent survey by UW Extension identified 18 counties that had a multi-agency council involved in county-wide hunger prevention issues. About half of these councils appear to focus primarily on supporting emergency food networks (food pantries and soup kitchens), but the others were involved in a variety of activities including increasing use of federal food programs, starting gardens and farmers markets, preparing food resource guides, conducting research, establishing SHARE sites, starting new Summer Food and School Breakfast sites, to name a few.

Grants and Training for Local Infrastructures. During the past 5 years Wisconsin communities were fortunate to receive leadership training and state funding through several initiatives to improve their capacity to fight hunger.

CBHP Grants. Wisconsin was one of the few states to recognize the importance of providing state funds to strengthen local food security infrastructures. Between 1995 and 1999 DHFS provided \$250,000 annually to local communities to undertake a broad range of hunger prevention activities. During this 5 year period the Community-Based Hunger Prevention grants (CBHP) provided \$1.25 million to 70 hunger projects in 50 counties before legislative authorization expired. Projects often leveraged additional funds from other community, business or government sources, and many times catalyzed further community initiatives.

A 1999 WISCAP review of the CBHP grants reported that grantees established hunger councils; improved emergency food organizations; conducted outreach on behalf of federal food programs; increased emergency food supplies; initiated community gardens; established farmers markets; increased support for breast-feeding; conducted surveys and needs assessments to guide program development; prepared and distributed local food resource directories; conducted community awareness campaigns; provided nutrition education; worked with at-risk groups (such as Hmong and Native Americans); increased access to CSA farms; and started kitchen incubator projects.

TAHL Projects. At the same time CBHP funds became available, Bread for the World, a national anti-hunger advocacy organization, funded a statewide project in Wisconsin to train local hunger leaders in 16 communities. The Transforming Anti-Hunger Leadership Project (TAHL), coordinated by UW Extension and Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee, gave local community teams information on food assistance programs, model programs and other resources, then provided on-going technical assistance to help each locally defined project. Many communities that received CBHP funding also received TAHL leadership training. HTFM continues to provide technical support to many of these community groups through newsletters, a resource library, site visits, and advocacy training. A recent effort has been made to increase involvement of hunger councils in public policy advocacy.

6. Economic and Job Security

Hunger and food insecurity is a result of insufficient income thus Wisconsin's continuing efforts to increase employment and wages are critical to food security. In this light, recent economic and wage trends among low-income families is especially relevant.

- **Poverty rate.** The Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS)⁷ reported that Wisconsin, in comparison to the rest of the nation, has historically had a lower than average percent of its population living below the poverty line. Today, Wisconsin's poverty rate is at 8.8% whereas the national rate is at 12.7%. As a result, Wisconsin has the second lowest poverty rate in the nation. The most recent data on child poverty in Wisconsin, as reported by COWS was 15% in the mid-1990s. Additionally, the number of working families with children that lived in poverty in 1997 was 8.9%.
- **Unemployment Rate.** Wisconsin has enjoyed exceptionally low unemployment rates, averaging 3.4% in 1998. A monthly average of about 100,000 persons were unemployed that year according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Wisconsin's statewide employment rate is among the best in the nation.
- **Employment Rates of Low-Income Households.** The NSAF survey (1997) conducted by the Urban Institute found significantly more low-income adults (age 25-54) are working in Wisconsin compared to national averages. The evidence shows low-income Wisconsin families are working, and low-income married mothers (57%), single parents (77%), and other adults (69%) are exceptional in this regard - being 12%-15% higher than national averages. Low-income married fathers (86%) work at rates comparable to the rest of the country. Many more Wisconsin families with incomes below 200% of poverty are working full or part-time compared to other regions of the country.
- **Low Wage Jobs.** COWS reported that low-wage employment has receded in the last several years. In 1999, about 1 in 6 full-time Wisconsin workers earned less than \$8.12/hour. In addition, the percentage of full-time workers earning low wages was 16%, and the percent of persons without high school degrees earning low-wages was 54%. Residents of rural counties in Wisconsin had a higher likelihood of low-wage jobs than did urban residents.

⁷ The State of Working Wisconsin 2000.

- **Income Gap.** Recent research reported by the Center on Budget Policy & Priorities and the Economic Policy Institute (2000) shows that the richest 20% of Wisconsin families boosted their income by 26 percent over the last decade, while income of the poorest 20% of families fell 1%. The wealthiest households earned an average of \$136,404 - 8.2 times the annual income of the poorest families - who averaged \$16,690. Nationally Wisconsin has the 8th lowest ratio. Ten years ago Wisconsin's ratio was 6.4. The average national ratio has gone from 9.3 to 10.6.
- **Housing.** High housing costs are often cited as a major factor contributing to food insecurity. In a recent survey of 4,000 food pantry clients by UW Extension 18% of respondents reported they had experienced a housing-related problem during the previous year. This included eviction, homelessness, or having to share housing. According to the study Out of Reach by the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, an individual in Wisconsin would need to earn a minimum of \$10.44/hour to afford the fair market rental unit, at 30% of income. The same report notes that a person earning the minimum wage would need to work 81 hours per week to afford a 2-bedroom unit at the HUD fair market rent.

Economic Support Programs. When wages are insufficient or when capacity to work is limited (as with disabled and elderly persons) families must depend on adequate support services to help close the gap. Major economic assistance programs include W-2, SSI, child care assistance, housing and energy assistance, Medicaid and Badger Care, child support and Earned Income Tax Credits. The effectiveness of these programs in meeting the needs of low-income families has a profound and direct impact on levels of hunger and food insecurity. They serve as essential complements to the major food assistance programs discussed earlier.

- **Earned Income Tax Credits.** State and federal Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC) offer a substantial economic benefit to lower income working families in Wisconsin. Wisconsin is one of about a dozen states that provide a state EITC in addition to the federal credit. A study of Milwaukee EITC usage by UW-Milwaukee Employment and Training Institute estimated state and federal credits helped raise 8,093 Milwaukee families above the poverty level in 1998. They also found that many eligible Milwaukee families are not claiming the credit - at least \$27 million went unclaimed in federal and state credits in 1998. A significant number of eligible low-income households statewide do not apply for federal and/or state EITC.
- **BadgerCare.** Extension's survey found 24% of pantry clients reported they could not afford health care for themselves or their children. Wisconsin's recent Badger Care initiative has made high quality health coverage available to low-income working families up to 185% of poverty who have no health insurance. August 2000 enrollment reached over 68,000 people.

7. RESEARCH

The Food Security Consortium is currently investigating where additional research, monitoring and evaluation may be needed to guide development of community initiatives and improve food security.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YEAR 2001

In 2000, the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) created the Wisconsin Food Security Consortium, a partnership with business, government agencies and representatives, and hunger relief and community based organizations whose goal is to develop a multi-faceted approach to addressing issues related to hunger and food access in Wisconsin. The Consortium is co-chaired by Susan Dreyfus, Administrator of DCFS and Michael Brophy, Corporate Communications Director at the Miller Brewing Company.

The Food Security Consortium in preparing this annual report, identified the following recommendations for its work in 2001:

1. Develop a strategic plan to more effectively address food security (emergency food assistance, access to food and related issues) in the State of Wisconsin;
2. Improve upon the data available for the annual scorecard and distribute statewide;
3. Improve data collection on food security issues throughout the state, analyze the trends, address areas of need and distribute the information statewide;
4. Enhance emergency food assistance and work to align it with distribution to low-income individuals linked at a variety of levels to resources designed to promote self-sufficiency; and
5. Review federal food assistance programs and make recommendations at the state and federal level for more efficient, effective program redesign or refinement. Specifically, review the Food Stamp Program during the reauthorization period.

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