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Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging (o4a) Advocacy Conference



State Human Services Advocates Panel

March 22, 2023

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Ohio's largest charitable response to hunger, representing
Ohio's 12 Feeding America foodbanks
and 3,600 member
agencies

Ohio's Largest Charitable Response to Hunger

- 12 Feeding America Foodbanks and 3,600 hunger relief agencies; food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters and placed based supplemental food providers located in K-12 school buildings, on colleges and university campuses, clinics, hospitals, low-income housing complexes and pop-up food distribution sites serving all 88 counties.
- Because hunger, food insecurity, and food hardship have been a persistent challenge made worse by the most widespread public health crisis in our lifetimes and the economic fallout it has created, our statewide hunger relief network has been responding to increasing and unprecedented levels of need for three years and counting.
- **What are we experiencing?**

Record Demand and Rising Hunger

- Record Demand – Over 3.1 million Ohioans served in the 4th quarter of 2022
- 678,747 of those served were ages 60+
- Over From SFY2011 to SFY2021, visits to food pantries by older Ohioans increased by 107 percent.
- Older Ohioans represented more than 1 in 5 or 22.5 percent of all food pantry visits.
- Older adults (60+) represent a growing share of Ohio's overall population, and their ability to meet their needs without help from hunger relief providers has deteriorated at an even faster rate over that same period.

What Is Food Insecurity?

- Food insecurity is the limited or uncertain availability of safe and nutritious foods.
- Experts understand that food insecurity is a complex phenomenon that can affect individuals and families in different ways and at different times in their lives:
- **Low food security** is a USDA term referring to households that experience negative changes in their diet, such as reduced quality or variety of food.
- **Very low food insecurity** is a USDA term designating disrupted eating patterns and lower amounts of food eaten by a given household.
- **Cliff effects** occur when a household's benefits are reduced or eliminated due to public benefit changes that occur due to public policy changes or an increase in income that triggers a disproportionate loss of government assistance.

Food Security and Health

- **Food insecurity affects health and well-being.** People experiencing food insecurity often face several compounding factors that make maintaining good health extremely difficult.
- **Poor nutrition:** In the U.S., inexpensive, widely available food tends to be unhealthy (e.g., chips and fast food). Families may need to choose between feeding themselves with nutritious foods and paying their bills.
- **Stress:** The stress of economic hardship that often accompanies food insecurity is itself a health risk for stroke, heart disease and other illnesses.
- **Delayed medical care:** People struggling with food insecurity often experience financial hardship and may need to choose between paying for food and paying for medical care. As a result, they tend to delay medical care, which can worsen illness or injury.
- **Shame and social stigma:** People experiencing food insecurity often face social stigma and shame, which can affect mental health and demoralize some from seeking supplemental food assistance.

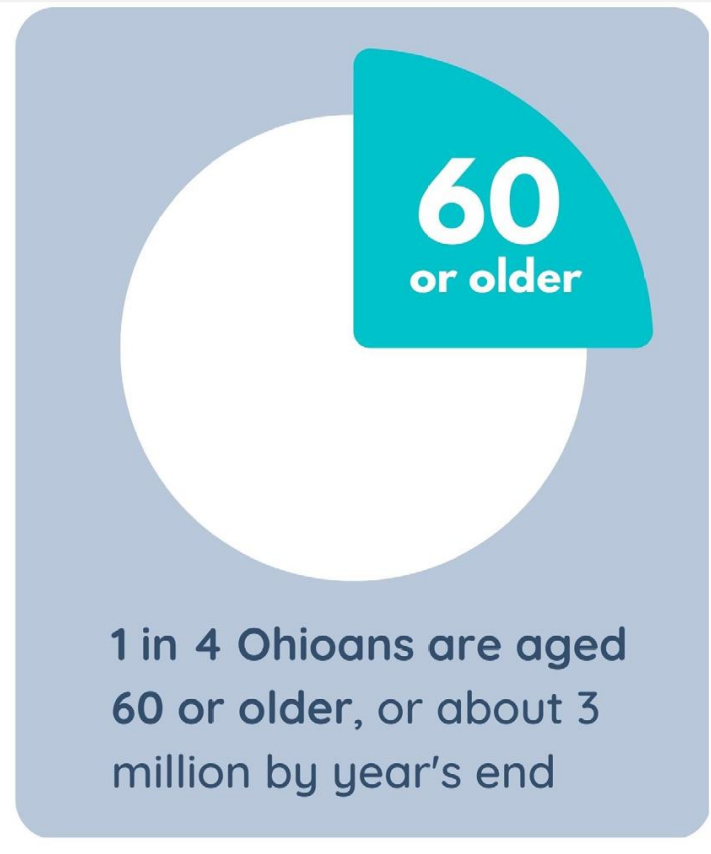
Food Insecurity Create Bad Options & Threats

- People living with food insecurity are often forced to choose between buying food and paying bills — “impossible” decisions that no person should have to make.
- Housing, rent, mortgage, taxes, etc.
- Medicine, Medical Care, Dental care, vision and hearing
- Personal Care, Personal Hygiene and Household Cleaning
- Rationing food and medicine
- Utilities including gas, electric, water, phone – internet/cable (luxury)
- Risk of predatory lending, credit card debt and scams
- Loss of security and risk of homelessness

Who Benefited from the SNAP Emergency Allotments?

- 1,466,608 million low-income Ohioans who are poor enough to qualify for the SNAP program, living in 738,000 households
- 60% of the Ohioans receiving the SNAP Emergency Allotments
- 245,749 Seniors (ages 60+)
- 616,737 Children (ages 0 to 17)
- 604,122 Adults (ages 18 to 59)
- The economic impact has been significant Ohio's grocers and retailers, with the state losing \$126 million in 100% federally funded benefits **per month, or more than \$1.44 billion over the next 12 months.**
- Foodbanks and emergency food providers can't fill this gap

The Greatest Generation – Hit the Hunger Cliff



- Older adults (60+) represent a growing share of Ohio's overall population (23.7 percent in 2020, compared to 21 percent in 2012).
- Seniors are struggling to meet their food needs without help from hunger relief providers.
- The end of the “Public Health Emergency” results in the immediate loss of SNAP Emergency Allotments and the beginning of the Medicaid Unwind.
- SNAP Emergency Allotments end for 245,749 seniors, whose benefits are going to be reduced, some by more than \$250 a month, returning to the minimum issuance of \$23.00 per month \$0.75 cents a day.

What has the extra SNAP benefits meant?

- *“At the end of the month, I don’t have to worry about waiting for the next month’s money. I have a little extra then and can buy the expensive bread that’s better for my diabetes. [I worry about] keeping the things I need, like bread and milk. Meat would be nice. If I can eat two meals a day and try to have enough food for the whole month, that’s good.”*
- *61-year-old single disabled woman living on \$861 per month in Meigs County, who will lose \$95 per month*
- *“I’m very grateful, I’m frightened when [increased SNAP benefit] goes away. It’s very important to me. I don’t want to lose it. I’m definitely going to have to rely more on foodbanks... when the pandemic [benefit] goes away I’m not going to have to worry about dieting because I won’t be able to buy enough food to eat. I’ll be on a government diet then.”*
- *61-year-old single disabled woman in Mahoning County, who will lose \$180 per month in SNAP n SNAP*

Ohio Has Options – Create a Senior SNAP Benefit

- Create and fund a state funded minimum SNAP benefit of \$50 per month
- Target 70,000 seniors that will only receive the minimum \$23 minimum federal SNAP benefit
- This benefit is estimated to cost the state \$42 million dollars over the biennium and assist nearly 70,000 older Ohioans currently below the benefit level of \$50/month.
- If a 1 or 2 person SNAP unit (household) is headed by an Ohioan who is 60 or older and receives less than \$50/month in benefits, the state would utilize state dollars to make that household whole to \$50 as long as that household remains eligible for SNAP. E.g., a person receives the minimum benefit of \$23/month.
- The state would provide this person with \$27/month ensuring they have \$50 a month or \$1.66/day to eat. If a person receives \$42/month in benefits the state would provide \$8 a month in state funds to bring this persons benefit to \$50 a month.

Other State's SNAP Enhancement Programs

- New Jersey – provides a state funded SNAP benefit of \$95 to everyone as of February 2023
 - <https://nj.gov/governor/news/news/562023/approved/20230208b.shtml#:~:text=By%20implementing%20a%20minimum%20monthly,putting%20food%20on%20the%20table>
- Pennsylvania – proposed a \$35 state funded SNAP benefit for everyone as of March 2023
 - https://www.media.pa.gov/Pages/Agriculture_details.aspx?newsid=1305
- Maryland – provides a state funded SNAP benefit of \$40 for older adults (62+) began in 2015, increase from \$30 to \$40 in 2022
 - Maryland House Bill 456
- Massachusetts – proposed sending SNAP recipients 40% of what they got from the pandemic boost for another three months. As of March 13, 2023, in the Massachusetts Senate for approval.
 - <https://www.wbur.org/news/2023/03/02/snap-massachusetts-ebt-masshealth-changes-newsletter>
- D.C. – provides a local funded benefit of 20% of the maximum benefit for your household size
 - <https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Legislation/B24-0600>

Other 2024/2023 State Budget opportunities

- Expand and adequately fund the Senior Community Services line item
- Support the Healthy Aging Grants for \$40 million (New)
- Support a State Senior SNAP Supplemental Benefit (New)
- Support Ohio Foodbanks at \$50 million per year to secure and distribute at least 100 million pounds, or 83 million meals, of nutritious, wholesome foods and the purchase of essential non-food household items, such as shampoo, toothpaste, baby wipes, diapers, and toilet paper.
- Support the Commodity Supplement Food Program, Senior Farmers Market Program and the Emergency Food Assistance Programs (TEFAP) to ensure that community-based organizations and hungry and food insecure Ohioans have access to the food they need to live an active healthy life.
- Support and provide \$2.5 million per year to fund Health Care Navigators to support and services to Ohioans who lose Medicaid coverage due the public health emergency unwind. Health Care Navigators are employed by foodbanks, CBO's, and other trusted community organizations, and federally qualified health centers, and are licensed by the Ohio Department of Insurance. These entities provide free, unbiased help navigating health insurance options.

The Greatest Generation – Need Your Voice

Please advocate for sufficient funding to support basic needs, home and community-based services, food, health care, and the supports services necessary for Ohio seniors to age in place, with dignity and respect.





Thank You - Questions?

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