

Interfaith Food Pantry

Anti-Hunger Action Team

Advocacy Academy

2016

**"ONE PERSON
CAN MAKE A
DIFFERENCE,
AND EVERYONE
SHOULD TRY."**

-JOHN F. KENNEDY

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Mission Statement

Our mission is to use education and awareness as tools to help end hunger. This is our challenge and our opportunity. Hunger in our communities is *not* an issue of limited food resources; it is logistics and legislations; it is education and creating a societal shift that *cares* for our neighbors, near and far. AHAT members will facilitate an environment of philanthropy within their communities. We give a voice to hunger and shine a light on its origins.

What is advocacy?

Short answer: show support for or promote a cause.

Long answer: Individuals or groups that aim to serve their communities by influencing political and social environments through action. Advocacy is voicing your opinion to directly engage your community, peers, and elected officials to shift policies and political systems that are not responding to an issue's needs. Through advocacy actions we are able to voice our opinions and share our stories to defend, support, and strengthen social issues.

Your role:

Get involved, get informed, and take action!

Advocacy is something anyone can do. Your voice is a powerful tool to combat hunger in our communities. By speaking up and sharing your stories, opinions, experiences, and facts about hunger you can motivate and influence members of your community and elected officials to become aware and (most importantly) care about these issues.

How to be a great advocate:

- 1) Know your stuff- be informed on current issues and information regarding your cause.
- 2) Communicate- speak up! Have a clear message and be able to effectively communicate simple talking points.
- 3) Engage others- raise awareness about hunger in your community, educate elected officials and voters.

How to develop an effective message: Know the difference between a problem and an issue. A problem is a broad area of concern whereas an issue is an answer that addresses that problem.

Example:

- Problem: Thousands of stray dogs are euthanized each year.
- Issue: The state needs more animal shelters that can offer spay and neuter services and educate the public about adoption vs. purchasing animals from breeders.

Exercise: write a problem about hunger and then define an issue.

Problem	Issue

Defining the issues within a problem helps advocates to be clear about their message and makes larger problems into more manageable smaller issues. Is there an issue within hunger that you are most passionate about? This may be a great place to start your first action.

Obstacles:

Time: One of the biggest challenges for effective advocacy is the misconception that it takes too much time and energy. Most food banks and soup kitchens spend volunteer efforts, employee hours and resources providing services directly to clients, leaving very little time to think about advocacy.

This is a little story about four people named *Everybody*, *Somebody*, *Anybody*, and *Nobody*. There was an important job to be done and *Everybody* was sure that *Somebody* would do it. *Anybody* could have done it, but *Nobody* did it. *Somebody* got angry about that because it was *Everybody's* job. *Everybody* thought that *Anybody* could do it, but *Nobody* realized that *Everybody* wouldn't do it. It ended up that *Everybody* blamed *Somebody* when *Nobody* did what *Anybody* could have done.

Uphill battle: It is easy to become discouraged by not seeing change happen immediately or votes that don't support our cause. Persistence pays off. It can take years to create change, but all the small steps; successes and failures along the way are necessary.

Food Insecurity

In a country as developed as the United States, it is difficult to imagine families not having access to enough food. The reality is that 1 in 6 people in the United States experiences food insecurity. The spectrum of hunger that exists in America occurs in different levels of severity, it is what is referred to as "food insecurity." The USDA measures food insecurity by the lack of access to enough nutritionally adequate foods for all members in a household throughout a given year. In 2014, 48 million Americans were food insecure, which means they may not know where their next meal is coming from.

Here is the latest data on food insecurity from Food and Research Action Center (FRAC):
"The latest numbers from USDA Household Food Security in the United States in 2014:

- More than 48.1 million Americans lived in households that struggled against hunger in 2014. The 2014 numbers were a slight decline (of fewer than a million people) from 2013, with the rate declining from 15.8 to 15.4 percent.
- The number of individuals in households that faced the deepest struggles with hunger – "very low food security" – was 5.5 percent in 2014.
- 15.3 million children lived in food insecure households in 2014, compared to 15.8 million in 2013.
- Households outside metropolitan areas (more rural areas) are seeing considerably deeper struggles with hunger compared to those inside metropolitan areas, with higher rates of food insecurity (17.1 percent compared to 13.5 percent), higher rates of food insecurity in households with children (23.6 percent compared to 18.4 percent), and higher rates of very low food security (7.3 percent compared to 5.3 percent).

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- Food insecurity rates for Black and Hispanic households were substantially above the national average, with 26.1 percent of Black households and 22.4 percent of Hispanic households reporting they struggled against hunger in 2014.
 - State food insecurity rates ranged from 22 percent of Mississippi households to 8.4 percent of North Dakota households for the period of 2012 to 2014, showing that no corner of the country is immune from food insecurity. (USDA uses three year averages for states to obtain adequate sample sizes.)”

New Jersey Food Insecurity

- From 2012 to 2014 11.7% of households in New Jersey are food insecure. With 4.9% falling into the category of very low food security.¹
- The number of food insecure families has doubled over the past ten years. (<https://tabletotable.org/feeding-nj>)

Morris County Food Insecurity and ALICE Report

United Way ALICE Report:

A: Asset

L: Limited

I: Income

C: Constrained

E: Employed

ALICE households bring in an income higher than the national poverty level, but not enough to cover the basic cost of living in the county. The total population that struggle to pay for the costs of basic needs is a combination of both poverty and ALICE households. The poverty level in Morris County is at 4% and at 21% for ALICE households. The rest of the population resides above the ALICE level.

The federal poverty guideline was developed in 1963 at a time when Americans were spending one third of their income on food. The Department of Agriculture determined the federal poverty line by creating the “thrifty meal plan budget” and multiplying it by

three. The thrifty meal plan is a budget designed to meet minimal nutritional intakes. The federal poverty lines formula no longer reflects realistic expenses.

The U.S. measure for poverty guideline is drastically different than that of the survival budget. In addition, the federal poverty guideline is exactly the same for all 48 contiguous states and slightly higher for Alaska and Hawaii. This method fails to appropriately adjust cost of living depending on location, whether a family lives in Omaha, Nebraska or Los Angeles, California the poverty guidelines are equal.

Take a look at the chart below from the United Way's ALICE report. It illustrates the annual cost of living for a single adult and a family of four living in Morris County. Compare this estimate to that of the federal poverty guidelines for one person is \$11,170 per year, and \$23,050 for a family of four.

Household Survival Budget, Morris County		
	SINGLE ADULT	FAMILY (INFANT AND PRE-K)
Housing	\$923	\$1,289
Child Care	\$0	\$1,637
Food	\$196	\$592
Transportation	\$311	\$623
Health Care	\$106	\$422
Miscellaneous	\$209	\$514
Taxes	\$555	\$579
Monthly total	\$2,300	\$5,656
ANNUAL TOTAL	\$27,599	\$67,871
Hourly wage	\$13.80	\$33.94

Causes of Hunger

Housing

Of all monthly expenses families face (food, utilities, insurance, child care) rent is usually the largest. Renters that pay more than 30% of their income on housing are what economists call “housing burdened.” In the United States, more than 8.5 million people spend more than 50% of their income towards housing costs.

Morris County has 29 affordable housing units for every 100 extremely low income (ELI) renter households. There are 2,594 adequate, affordable, and available units for 8,878 ELI renters. (<http://apps.urban.org/features/rental-housing-crisis-map/>)

Living Wage

Living wage refers to a wage high enough to maintain and sustain a healthy and safe standard of living. A living wage factors in expenses like housing, food, childcare, transportation, health care, taxes. The federal minimum wage is \$7.25. New Jersey’s minimum wage is \$8.38, however according to the MIT living wage calculator the living wage in Morris County for a family of four (with one working adult) is \$25.52. This creates a living wage gap of \$17.14. As reported by the United Way’s 2014 ALICE report, “more than half of all jobs in New Jersey pay less than \$20 an hour and most pay between \$10 and \$15 per hour.”

According to the Department of Labor, 9 out of 10 minimum wage workers are adults age 20 years or older. In 2013, President Obama called for states to increase their minimum wages; 18 states have taken action to increase their minimum wage. In 2015, Senator Patty Murray from Washington introduced the Raise the Wage Act (S.1150). This bill would “(1) \$8.00 an hour on January 1, 2016, or, if later, on the first day of the third month after enactment of this Act; (2) \$9.00 an hour after one year; (3) \$10.00 an hour after two years; (4) \$11.00 an hour after three years; (5) \$12.00 an hour after four years; and (6) the amount the Secretary of Labor determines (based on increases in the median hourly wage of all employees) after five years, and annually thereafter.”⁵

[Raise the Wage Act](#)

[Minimum wage myths](#)

[The United Way's efforts to help families find better paying jobs](#)

[The Living Wage Gap: State by State](#)

[Living Wage Calculator: Morris County](#)

[When living wage is minimum wage](#)

Poverty and Unemployment

The median household income for Morris County is around \$95,294, while the state average is leveled at \$69,667. The current unemployment rate for the county is at 7.1%, but averages at 9.5% for the state of New Jersey.

Feeding America's 2014 data shows in the United States:

- 46.7 million people live in poverty.
- 15.5 million children live in poverty.
- 4.6 million seniors live in poverty.

Food Access and Nutrition

[Health Consequences](#)

Inadequate nutrition adversely affects health and wellbeing at all stages of life. Particularly, nutrition during the first three stages of life is important for establishing foundations for a future of good physical and mental health.

Food insecurity health consequences data from Feeding America:

- "Pregnant women who experience food insecurity are more likely to experience birth complications than women who are food secure.
- Inadequate access to food during pregnancy has been shown to increase the risk for low birth weight in babies.
- Food insecurity has also been linked with delayed development, poorer attachment, and learning difficulties in the first two years of life.

Health Concerns

Studies have found that food insecurity has been associated with health problems for children that may hinder their ability to function normally and participate fully in school and other activities.

- Children who are food insecure are more likely to require hospitalization.
- Children who are food insecure may be at higher risk for chronic health conditions, such as anemia and asthma.
- Children who are food insecure may have more frequent instances of oral health problems.
- Food insecurity among young children is associated with poorer physical quality of life, which may prevent them from fully engaging in daily activities such as school and social interaction with peers.

Behavioral Challenges

Children who experience food insecurity may be at higher risk for behavioral issues and social difficulties.

- Food insecure children may be at greater risk of truancy and school tardiness.
- When they are in school, children who are food insecure may experience increases in an array of behavior problems including: fighting, hyperactivity, aggression, anxiety, mood swings, and bullying.”⁶

Food Waste

Roughly 30% of all food grown and produced in America will go to waste. This loss equates to 387 billion calories and \$161.6 billion.⁷ Food waste occurs at nearly all levels across the food system, but at least 21% (the highest level) of waste is taking place on the consumer level.⁷

[NRDC Issue Paper](#)

[USDA Food Waste](#)

[Recommended Reading: American Wasteland by Jonathan Bloom](#)

[Recommended Viewing: Just Eat it](#)

Social Safety Net

Current hunger relief programs:

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP):

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program offers food assistance to millions of low-income families and individuals. It is the largest hunger program in the social safety net. For fiscal year 2016 over 44 million Americans received SNAP benefits with the average monthly benefit being \$125.67 per person. ² In 2015, over 905,000 people participated in SNAP monthly.² To be eligible to receive SNAP benefits and person must meet certain income and work guidelines:

Household Income Limits for Food Stamps/SNAP

People in Household	Gross Monthly Income Limits at 130% of the FPL **	Gross Monthly income at 185% of the FPL *	Net Monthly Income Limits (100% FPL) ***
1	\$1,276	\$1,815	\$981
2	1,726	2,456	1,328
3	2,177	3,098	1,675
4	2,628	3,739	2,021
5	3,078	4,380	2,368
6	3,529	5,022	2,715
7	3,980	5,663	3,061
8	4,430	6,304	3,408
Each additional person	+451	+642	+347

** This is the level applied to most households.*

*** This level is applied when a household has committed a prior intentional program violation.*

**** This limit applies after taking certain expenses (deductions) into account.*

(Source: www.lsnjlaw.org)

Women, Infants and Children (WIC):

WIC provides supplemental nutritious foods, nutrition education, and health screenings.

WIC's target population are low-income and nutritionally at risk:

- Pregnant women (through pregnancy and up to 6 weeks after birth).
- Breastfeeding women (up to infant's 1st birthday).
- Non Breastfeeding postpartum women (up to 6 months after birth).
- Children up to their 5th birthday.

In 2015, over 161,000 New Jersey residents participated in the WIC program.³

National School Lunch Program:

A federally assisted meal program that provides low-cost or free lunches to children through public and nonprofit private schools. This program is directed at children in both public and private schools. There are three levels of eligibility that depend on the income of the children's family:

- Free breakfast: families that are at or below 130% of the federal poverty level
- Reduced-price lunch: families between 130%-185% of the federal poverty level
- Full-price lunch: families above 185% of the federal poverty level

Civics 101

Government primer

There are three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial.

Legislative branch:

Congress represents the legislative branch of the government. There are two bodies of congress- the senate and the house of representatives. Both the Senate and House have the power to introduce and create new legislation. There are 100 senators; two from each of the 50 states. Senators serve a six year term and represent their entire state. Before a bill is brought before the full senate, it is voted on in smaller, specific

committees. There are 435 house members, the numbers from each state vary depending on population. House members serve two year terms and rather than representing an entire state, they represent specific districts within a state. Like the Senate, the House is divided into committees to take on larger matters on which it legislates. If a committee approves a bill, the bill is then sent to the entire House for debate.

Judicial Branch:

The Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) executes jurisdiction over cases involving the U.S. constitution. There are 9 supreme court justices that are appointed by the President.

The Executive Branch:

The President of the United States (POTUS) heads the executive branch, which also consists of the vice president and 15 cabinet members. The POTUS is responsible for signing bills passed by Congress into laws or has the power to veto them.

[Has the presidency become a dictatorship](#)

[How a bill really becomes a law](#)

State and Local Government:

State government is modeled after federal government and contains the same three branches: legislative, executive, and judicial. On the state level, executive branch is headed by the governor. The legislative branch which is made up of two chambers: the upper and lower house. The upper house, also known as the Senate, has members that serve four-year terms and the lower house, known as the House of Representatives, has members that serve two-year terms. Members of both houses are responsible for approving state budgets and considering legislation that becomes law. The judicial branch is led by the state's supreme court which concentrates on correcting errors made in lower courts.

Advocate's role in government:

- Representatives need to hear from you! Let elected officials know what issues are important to you and your community. They can be reached by email, phone, (physical) mail, or face to face visits to their office.
- Attend public hearings on legislation and provide your testimony.
- Anyone can write legislation! You must find a legislator to sponsor your bill for it to be introduced.

Food Policy

Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act (CNR)

The CNR authorizes all federal child nutrition programs, including WIC and the National School Lunch Program. While these programs are permanently authorized, every five years Congress reviews these programs through a reauthorization process. Reauthorization allows an opportunity to strengthen child nutrition programs to better meet growing and changing needs of the children and families they serve.

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 expired September 30th, 2015. The Senate Agriculture Committee's reauthorization bill, [The Improving Child Nutrition Integrity and Access Act of 2016](#) was reported by committee on July 6th, 2016. The new statute should maintain the critical improvements created by the previous reauthorization. As the house considers this bill there are several areas to improve and strengthen children's nutrition programs.

Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) has outlined a priority list for Congress to consider through reauthorization:

- Cosponsor the Summer Meals Act of 2015 (H.R. 1728)- Improve summer food service program by allowing community-based organizations to operate year round, thus increasing low-income child participation rates.
- Cosponsor the Stop Child Summer Hunger Act (H.R. 2715)- Provide a summer EBT program.

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- Cosponsor the Early Childhood Nutrition Improvement Act (H.R. 3886)- Allows an additional healthy meal or snack for eligible children in care eight or more hours a day.
 - Increase community eligibility for schools to participate in the national school lunch program.
 - Cosponsor the Wise Investment in Our Children Act (H.R. 2660)- Ensure that children from ages five to six who are not receiving nutritional support through schools can access nutrition assistance through the WIC program.

Take Action!

Convey your message:

The five key points to consider when determining your message and how to effectively deliver it to your audience.

1. Introduce yourself:
 - Your name
 - Where are you from?
 - What organizations are you affiliated with?
2. What is the issue?
 - Elevator speech of your issue. Two to three sentences that plainly explain the issue details.
3. Why does it matter to you?
 - Why do you care?
 - Does it affect your life or people in your community?
 - Personal story.
4. Why should they care?
 - Is this happening in their community?
 - Will it affect them?
 - Why is it important?
5. Clear call to action

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- Be specific!
 - Have an outcome in mind- a vote, a signature.
 - Don't ask for "support," support can be too vague, instead ask for a "yes" or "no."

Resources and Reports

Childhood Hunger in the Suburbs:

<http://fairshareonline.org/sites/g/files/g979676/f/201509/HungerReport08-17-15.pdf>

Civics 101:

<http://www.nacns.org/docs/Civics101.pdf>

Food Research & Action Center:

<http://frac.org/>

Food Policy Scorecard:

<http://foodpolicyaction.org/>

Sources:

¹ "Prevalence of Household-Level Food Insecurity and Very Low Food Security by State 2012-2014 (." FRAC, 8 Sept. 2015. Web.

² "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)." *Food and Nutrition Service*. USDA, n.d. Web. 31 Aug. 2016.

³ <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/pd/26wifypart.pdf>

⁴ <http://frac.org/pdf/child-nutrition-reauthorization-2016.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/1150>

⁶ <http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/impact-of-hunger/child-hunger/child-development.html>

⁷ <http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/1282296/eib121.pdf>