



# Hunger in America 2014

Special Report for Lake County, Illinois  
Prepared for Northern Illinois Food Bank



*Funded by: The Lake County Community Foundation*

**THE  
LAKE COUNTY  
COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION**

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THE CHICAGO COMMUNITY TRUST

# **Hunger in America 2014**

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Prepared for Northern Illinois Food Bank**

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**A Report on Charitable Food Distribution in 2013**

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# Chapter 1. Introduction and Background Information

From 2012-2013, Northern Illinois Food Bank participated in a national study, *Hunger in America 2014* (HIA 2014), commissioned by Feeding America, a national network of food banks. In addition to national data on charitable food assistance, the study resulted in nearly 200 local reports, one for each of the participating food banks in the Feeding America network, including Northern Illinois Food Bank. A subsequent analysis of the findings for Northern Illinois Food Bank was undertaken to focus more closely on the breadth of services and depth of need in Lake County, Illinois. This report outlines the national HIA 2014 study design, but concentrates on the study's findings for the food bank's clients in Lake County, taking into account outside data on the local social and economic conditions of the county.

The major trends that emerged from HIA 2014 for Lake County, which are discussed in further detail throughout this report, include the following:

1. Older children comprise a large percentage of the individuals receiving food assistance in this county, but seniors are underrepresented among charitable food recipients.
2. The Latino population in Lake County faces unique challenges to affording food and their other basic needs, as indicated by the fact that Latinos are disproportionately represented among charitable food recipients.
3. Although many client households are striving to attain post-high school education, few have college-educated members.
4. Most client households have full-time employment, but their earnings are not commensurate with the cost of living in Lake County.
5. While Lake County is a relatively wealthy county overall, many clients and their families are struggling to afford stable housing.
6. Client households report relatively low SNAP participation rates, despite potential eligibility.

The remainder of this chapter provides an overview of Lake County, the *Hunger in America* study, and the need for charitable food, along with response to that need by the Feeding America and Northern Illinois Food Bank networks.

## **i. Lake County**

Situated directly north of Cook County and the city of Chicago, Lake County is in the northeast corner of the state of Illinois, meeting the southern border of Wisconsin to the north and Lake Michigan to the east. Lake County occupies nearly 444 square miles of land with a population density of nearly 1,586 persons per square mile. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the population of Lake County exceeded 703,400 people in 2010. Lake County is also one of the state's

wealthiest counties, with a median household income of more than \$77,000 and high property values.<sup>1</sup>

## **ii. Hunger in America Study Series**

*Hunger in America* is a series of quadrennial studies that provides comprehensive demographic profiles of individuals and families seeking food assistance through the charitable sector and documents the response of hunger-relief services within the Feeding America network to meet their needs. Conducted since 1993, *Hunger in America* is the largest study of charitable food distribution in the United States. The study findings provide insight into the challenges that many individuals face in accessing sufficient food to feed themselves and their families. The information gathered through the *Hunger in America* series aids in the development of effective hunger-relief programs, guides public policy and advocacy efforts focused on addressing food insecurity, and educates the public about the issue of hunger.

HIA 2014 is the sixth and most comprehensive iteration of the study. Like previous iterations of the *Hunger in America* study series, HIA 2014 was comprised of two components – an Agency Survey and a Client Survey – which were conducted in sequential phases between October 2012 and August 2013. The national results are based on responses from 32,000 partner agencies and more than 60,000 clients at 12,500 food programs within the Feeding America network.

As a member of the Feeding America network, Northern Illinois Food Bank (also to be referred to as “the food bank”), located in Geneva, Illinois, participated in HIA 2014. Among the 13 counties served by Northern Illinois Food Bank, Lake County is one of its largest, and a large portion of the data gathered by the food bank came from agencies and clients within the county. All estimates referenced for Lake County may be found in the data tables of the Appendix of this report; for more information on the national network’s agencies and clients, please refer to *Hunger in America 2014*.<sup>2</sup> Information on all of Northern Illinois Food Bank’s agencies and clients may be found in the food bank’s comprehensive local report.<sup>3</sup>

## **iii. Study Design: Agency Survey and Client Survey**

The Agency Survey was fielded electronically to partner agencies of Feeding America member food banks that participated in the study, between October 2012 and January 2013. Partner agencies are nonprofit entities that operate one or more charitable food programs that distribute food to clients

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, State and County QuickFacts, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Feeding America, *Hunger in America 2014*, National Report. August 2014. Available at: <http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/our-research/the-hunger-study/>

<sup>3</sup> Feeding America, *Hunger in America 2014*, Food Bank Report for Northern Illinois Food Bank. August 2014. Available at: <http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/our-research/the-hunger-study/local-reports.html>

in need; many partner agencies also operate programs that provide non-food services, such as clothing or furniture distribution. Food programs may or may not be located in the same physical space as the “parent” agency. The study design was based on this organizational structure and partner agencies were asked to report, via the Agency Survey, the number and types of food and non-food programs that they operate. In addition, the Agency Survey contained questions about staffing and volunteers, sources of food, challenges that agencies and their programs face in distributing food, and others related to general operations and capacity.

The Client Survey was designed to better understand the circumstances of people seeking food assistance through the Feeding America network, the struggles they face in securing food, and the strategies they employ to cope with food insecurity. The survey was available in five languages – English, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese. More than 6,000 data collectors administered the Client Survey, between April and August 2013, to randomly sampled clients of charitable food programs. Participating clients were asked to respond to a series of questions about themselves and their households electronically via a tablet. The survey questions covered a wide range of topics related to demographics, education, housing, health, employment status, military service, food security, use of charitable and public food assistance, and coping strategies used to access food among clients and their household members.

#### **iv. Methodological Considerations in Understanding and Interpreting Findings**

The findings for this report on food insecurity and charitable food assistance in Lake County represent a subset of the larger HIA 2014 national study. As such, the findings and analysis are consistent with the design of the national study. Although the *Hunger in America* study has been conducted regularly for nearly two decades, the most recent study is a departure from previous iterations in its scope and design. *Hunger in America 2010* focused on pantries, kitchens, and shelters, often known as emergency food programs. In contrast, HIA 2014 includes numerous other program types, thus broadening the spectrum of programs described and included in data collection. Client Surveys were also conducted at approximately twice as many programs across the country as compared to *Hunger in America 2010*. Including this broader universe was intended to better capture the diversity of programs and clients in the Feeding America network.

HIA 2014 utilizes a new design, with food programs classified as either grocery or meal programs, rather than the three sub-types of emergency programs. Grocery programs distribute non-prepared foods, groceries and other household supplies for off-site use, usually for preparation in the client’s home. Meal programs provide prepared meals or snacks on site or in the client’s home to clients in need who may or may not reside on the agency’s premises. One of the reasons for this division is the different way in which a client is defined at each of these program types. For meal programs, the client is the individual who receives the prepared meal or snack on site at the program. For example, an individual attending a senior congregate meal program receives services, but no one else residing at that individual’s home may be a food program client. Consequently, when data collectors counted

and sampled clients in meal programs, each eligible individual on site was counted and sampled separately. Sampled individuals served as the respondents.

For grocery programs, every member of the household receiving the groceries may benefit from the grocery products brought home; thus, each member of the household is considered a client and together they are considered one household unit. When counting and sampling clients for grocery programs, sampling was done by counting household units. If the household was sampled, one adult household member volunteered to serve as the respondent on behalf of the household.

Clients who responded to the survey answered questions about themselves and their households. The data tables in the Appendix include some data related to the characteristics of all clients, and other data related to client households; the latter allow for an understanding of the background and home circumstances of all clients, regardless of whether the entire household receives food program services.

The sampling process used in HIA 2014 was designed to produce data that are representative of each food bank's *service area*; it was not designed to guarantee that data at the smaller unit of the *county* would be representative. Nonetheless, for the first time in the history of the *Hunger in America* series, HIA 2014 allowed for the production of data at the county level. County-level data tables were generated for each county in which at least 25 completed Client Surveys were collected from among at least five completed program visits. For this purpose, a program was designated as belonging in a particular county based on the address of the program's parent agency, recognizing that the actual service location of the program may or may not be in the same county as the parent agency. In order to be counted as complete, a survey must include responses to at least 50 percent or more of the 'core questions' which every client was asked, irrespective of skip patterns. In Lake County, 15 program visits were completed and 69 completed Client Surveys were collected.

Along with information collected from the agencies located in Lake County through the Agency Survey, the data gathered were weighted for nonresponse in order to estimate the quantity and circumstances of clients served in the county and the agencies and programs that provide those services. As a sample-based estimate, each percentage has a margin of error, and there is a 90 percent probability that the true value in the population falls within the interval equal to the sample estimate plus or minus the indicated margin of error.

## **v. Underrepresentation of Children**

It is important to note that the study was not designed to be fully representative of the children served by the Feeding America network of food banks. Addressing the issue of hunger among children is an important focus of the Feeding America network; Northern Illinois Food Bank and food banks across the network provide food to many programs that uniquely serve children (e.g. Backpack Program and afterschool meals). Some information on these programs was gathered through the Agency Survey; however, because children were ineligible for participation in the Client Survey due to research protocol that prohibits consent by minors, such programs were not eligible to be visited during the survey period. Additionally, children at meal programs were not asked to

participate in the survey. The study does report on households with children who receive grocery program services, thus including children in the client estimates for grocery programs. However, the study underestimates the number of children served by member food banks in the Feeding America network, including Northern Illinois Food Bank.

## **vi. Overview of National Feeding America Network and Northern Illinois Food Bank Network**

Northern Illinois Food Bank is one member of the Feeding America national network of food banks. Founded in 1983, Northern Illinois Food Bank currently has three distribution centers, in Geneva, Loves Park, and Park City, from which it distributes food to more than 350 partner agencies that serve clients across 13 counties: Boone, DeKalb, DuPage, Grundy, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, Ogle, Stephenson, Will, and Winnebago. Combined, the population of Northern Illinois Food Bank's service area totaled approximately four million in 2013.

Feeding America is a nationwide network of approximately 200 member food banks, including Northern Illinois Food Bank, that collectively serve all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. As the largest domestic hunger-relief charity in the United States, the Feeding America network provides food assistance to more than 46 million individuals in need each year.

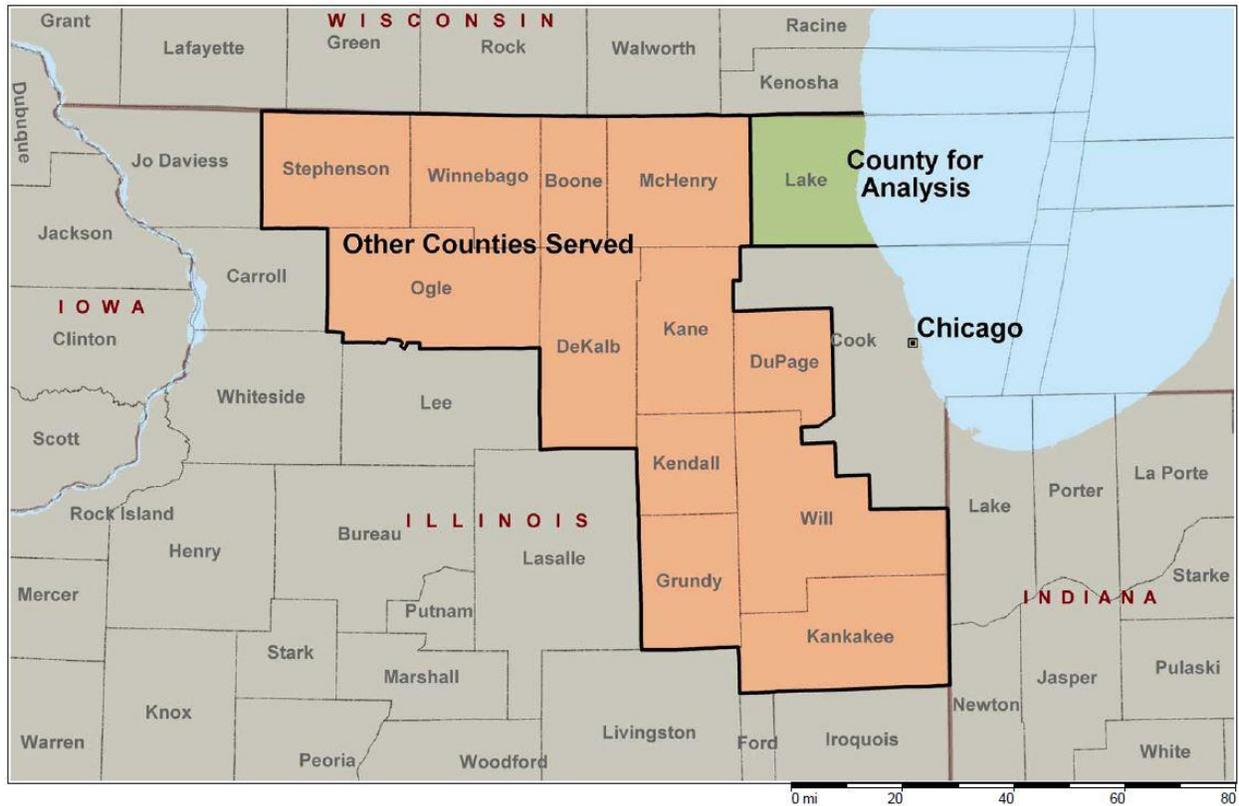
The Feeding America national office, located in Chicago, Illinois, supports the member food banks across the country in a variety of ways, such as securing food from corporate manufacturers and retailers and facilitating the acquisition of government food supplies. The national office also supports programs that help to improve food security, provides assistance in the form of grants, and raises awareness about the issue of hunger. Due to their close proximity, Feeding America and Northern Illinois Food Bank often partner with one another informally and formally. As an example, Northern Illinois Food Bank staff conduct food bank tours for interested national donors and are able to connect donors with volunteer opportunities. Similarly, Feeding America national office staff are able to support the food bank by volunteering and engaging in fundraising efforts led by the food bank.

Northern Illinois Food Bank and its fellow member food banks are on the front lines of hunger relief, partnering with local agencies and food programs to distribute food to individuals and families in need. They work to secure food and funds through a variety of sources. In addition to support from the national office, food banks may receive federal hunger-relief funding in the form of commodities, meal reimbursements, or grants, as well as state and local funding to support their work. Each food bank distributes food to its own network of partner agencies that receive, store, and distribute the donated food and grocery products to clients in need.

The partner agencies operate food programs such as food pantries, kitchens, and shelters in order to provide food to individuals facing hunger in their area. Each food bank may work with hundreds of partner agencies. Partner agencies vary in size; some operate a single program, such as a food pantry in a small space, while others are large community organizations that distribute food through various programs at multiple locations.

Partner agencies can provide either emergency or nonemergency food assistance to clients, or, in the case of large multiservice agencies, both. Emergency programs include food pantries that distribute non-prepared foods and grocery products to clients who use these where they live, kitchens that provide prepared meals on site, and emergency shelters that serve meals to clients. Nonemergency programs such as day care and senior congregate-feeding programs have a primary purpose other than emergency food distribution, but they also distribute food. Additionally, food banks and partner agencies may provide clients with outreach, education, referrals, and/or application assistance related to federal nutrition programs.

**Figure 1. Lake County within the Service Area of Northern Illinois Food Bank<sup>4</sup>**



<sup>4</sup> Copyright © and (P) 1988–2010 Microsoft Corporation and/or its suppliers. All rights reserved. <http://www.microsoft.com/mappoint/Certain mapping and direction data> © 2010 NAVTEQ. All rights reserved. The Data for areas of Canada includes information taken with permission from Canadian authorities, including: © Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, © Queen's Printer for Ontario. NAVTEQ and NAVTEQ ON BOARD are trademarks of NAVTEQ. © 2010 Tele Atlas North America, Inc. All rights reserved. Tele Atlas and Tele Atlas North America are trademarks of Tele Atlas, Inc. © 2010 by Applied Geographic Systems. All rights reserved.

Northern Illinois Food Bank works with local food manufacturers and retailers, companies, foundations, and individuals to procure food for the residents of its service area who are in need. The food bank distributes food to its partner agencies, which operate food programs, such as pantries, kitchens, and congregate feeding sites that provide food to clients. Northern Illinois Food Bank also operates a number of direct distribution programs in the community, including child nutrition programs, senior food boxes, and mobile pantries. Additionally, members of Northern Illinois Food Bank's SNAP Outreach Team help local residents apply for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food Stamps) benefits.

## **vii. The Need for Charitable Food Assistance**

Across the country, food banks like Northern Illinois Food Bank serve an important role in addressing food insecurity. While the federal government includes many safety net programs for low-income people, including those specific to food assistance, like SNAP, the charitable sector provides an additional source of food for those who struggle to secure sufficient food. The federal government regularly measures the extent of households' challenges securing food, as does Feeding America.

The federal government annually measures household food security, defined as all people in a household having enough food for an active healthy life at all times. In 2012, more than one in seven households in the United States (18 million, or 15 percent) experienced food insecurity at some time during the year, meaning they experienced limited or uncertain access to adequate food, including reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet.<sup>5</sup>

In Illinois, the overall food insecurity rate of 14 percent (1.8 million) in 2012 was slightly below the national average. While the magnitude of the problem is clear, national and even state estimates of food insecurity can mask the variation that exists at the local level. In addition, food banks are rooted in their local communities and need specific information at the ground level in order to be responsive to unique local conditions.

Feeding America's *Map the Meal Gap* research provides detailed information for every county and congressional district in the United States, including the food insecurity rate, the number of individuals who are food insecure, and their potential income-eligibility for federal programs. At ten percent, the overall food insecurity rate in Lake County in 2012, essentially unchanged from 2011, was significantly lower than the state or national averages. However, this means that an estimated 68,650 individuals living in Lake County are struggling with food insecurity. Poverty, a key national

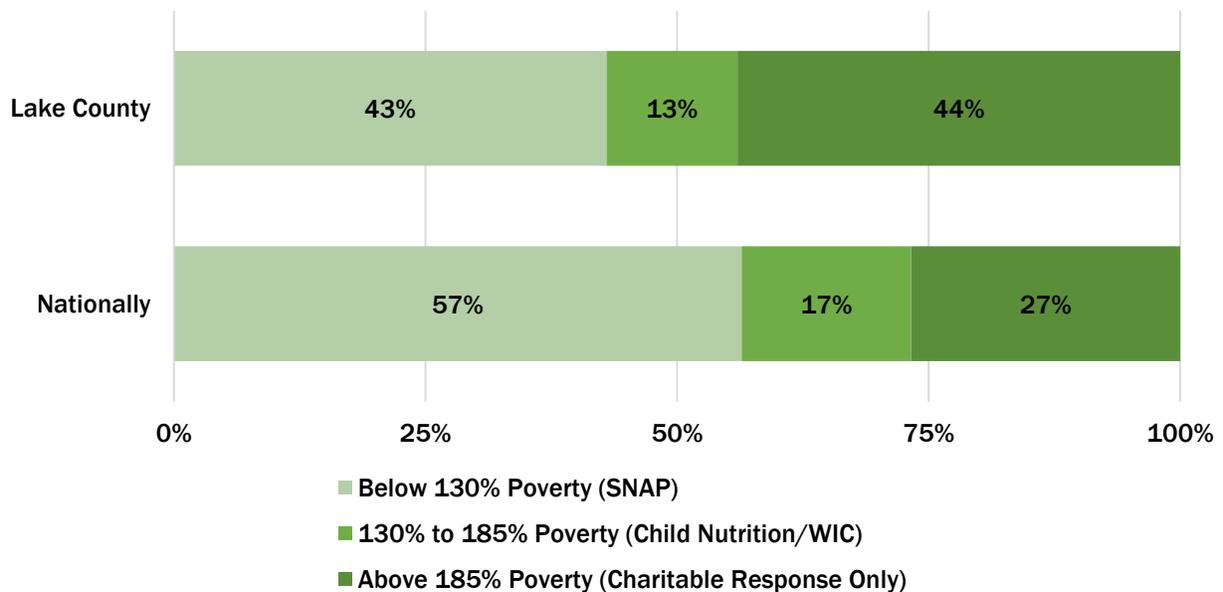
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<sup>5</sup> Alicia Coleman-Jensen, Mark Nord, and Anita Singh, Household Food Security in the United States in 2012, ERR-155 (Washington, DC: US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, 2013). These numbers exclude the homeless and those in temporary housing, many of whom are served by the private food assistance network.

and county-level economic indicator that influences food insecurity, also stayed approximately the same (eight percent in 2011 compared to nine percent in 2012), as did unemployment (nine percent both years), another key driver of the *Map the Meal Gap* food insecurity model. Another key independent variable in *Map the Meal Gap*, homeownership, fell slightly from 2011 to 2012 (from 78 percent to 77 percent), as did median household income (from \$79,666 to \$79,085).

Estimating income eligibility for food assistance programs within the food insecure population can also provide important insight into the potential strategies that individuals can use to address hunger. Notable differences emerge between the food insecure population nationally and the food insecure population within Lake County when focusing on income level (see Figure 2). Households that are above 185 percent of the poverty line are typically ineligible for most federal nutrition assistance programs. Twenty-seven percent of food insecure individuals nationally, and 44 percent of food insecure individuals in Lake County, have incomes that are above 185 percent of the poverty line, indicating that the charitable sector may be their only option for food assistance. Households that have incomes below 130 percent of the poverty line are likely income-eligible for SNAP. While 57 percent of food insecure individuals nationally may be eligible for SNAP benefits, 44 percent of food insecure individuals in Lake County have incomes below the SNAP threshold. Those that have incomes between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty line likely do not qualify for SNAP benefits, but may be eligible for other government programs like the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Nationally, 17 percent of the food insecure population have incomes between these two thresholds. In contrast, 13 percent of the food insecure population in Lake County have incomes between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty line.

**Figure 2. Program Income-Eligibility among Food Insecure Population**



**Data Source: Map the Meal Gap 2014**

A closer look at income thresholds among the food insecure population reflects significant variations in program income eligibility within states and across the nation. Across the country, there are nearly 500 counties where at least 40 percent of food insecure people are likely ineligible for government assistance programs and most of these (66 percent) are in metropolitan areas that tend to have higher-than-average median incomes. Lake County, which is near Chicago, Illinois, has an estimated 68,650 food insecure persons, 57 percent of whom are likely *ineligible* for SNAP. Lake County is also one of 23 counties in Illinois where at least 40 percent of food insecure individuals are estimated to have incomes too high to be eligible for any federal nutrition assistance programs (above 185 percent of poverty). Thus, other strategies, including charitable food assistance, are particularly important for addressing food insecurity in counties like Lake County, where higher incomes render many ineligible for federal assistance and higher costs create pressure on food budgets for those families struggling to make ends meet.

### **viii. Charitable Food Assistance Network in Lake County**

To help address food insecurity in Lake County and throughout its service area, Northern Illinois Food Bank partners with local agencies to provide charitable food assistance.

According to HIA 2014, Northern Illinois Food Bank partners with 64 agencies in Lake County. Together, these agencies report operating 80 food programs and 23 other programs providing non-food or food-related benefits (e.g., food benefits applications) assistance.<sup>6</sup> Food programs include those that typically provide emergency assistance, such as food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters, and those that provide nonemergency assistance, such as day care and senior-congregate feeding programs. Of all food programs in Lake County, two-thirds (66%) are grocery programs while one-third (34%) are meal programs. Typically, traditional food pantries are the most predominant subtype of grocery programs, although other program models, such as mobile pantries or home-delivered groceries exist as well. This balance of food program types is strikingly similar to the balance at both the national level and for all of Northern Illinois Food Bank's service area, where the proportions are nearly identical. Nationally, 67 percent of food programs operated by partner agencies are grocery programs and 33 percent are meal programs. Similarly, the composition in Northern Illinois Food Bank's service area is 68 percent grocery programs and 32 percent meal programs. In Lake County, as in the rest of the nation, food pantries and other grocery programs are more common than meal programs.

While there may be overlap among clients using meal and grocery programs, HIA 2014 provides evidence that, as a group, clients who use meal programs are different than clients that use grocery

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<sup>6</sup> The numbers reported here are those documented at the time of data collection for the HIA 2014 study, in 2012-2013. The numbers may have shifted in the intervening time.

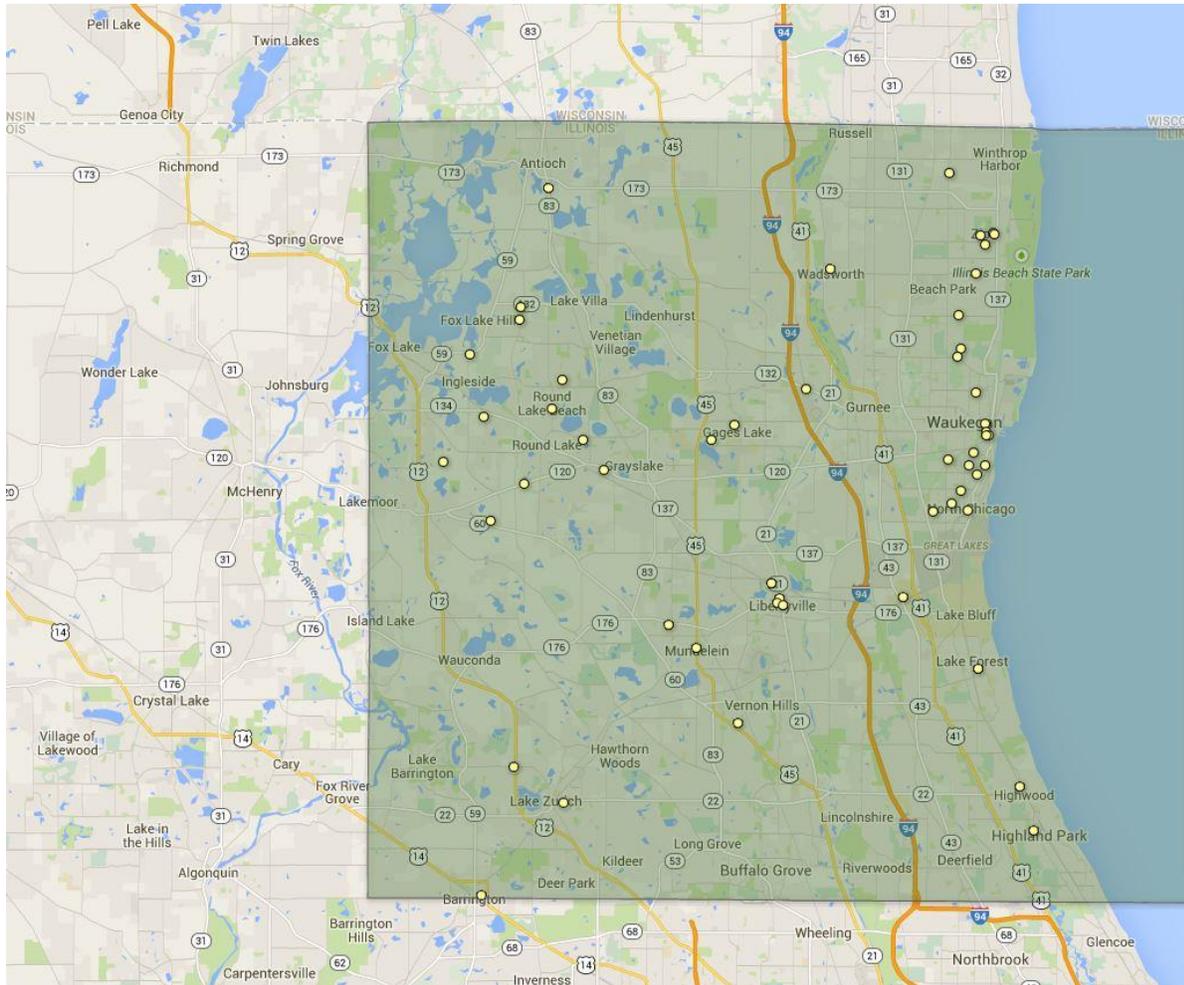
programs. Nationally, client households attending grocery programs are much more likely than client households of meal programs to include a child. In addition, nearly two-thirds (65%) of meal program client households are comprised solely of non-senior adults, compared to under a third (33%) of grocery program client households.<sup>7</sup> The data collected in Lake County were too limited to support an analysis of client household by age composition and program type; however, given the disproportionate presence of grocery programs, it merits further investigation in future research.

The schedules and locations of charitable food programs are two factors that greatly influence clients' access to food. The pantries available to clients in Lake County are located in various communities throughout the county (see Figure 3). They operate varying schedules, with some available to clients as many as 40 hours each week, while others are open just a few hours each month, available in an emergency situation, or offered by appointment only. Access restrictions vary across these programs as well; some limit use to residents of the same geographical location, and others enforce frequency of use restrictions, such as limiting visits by an individual household to once per month.

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<sup>7</sup> Feeding America, *Hunger in America 2014*, National Report. August 2014.

**Figure 3. Pantry Locations in Lake County**

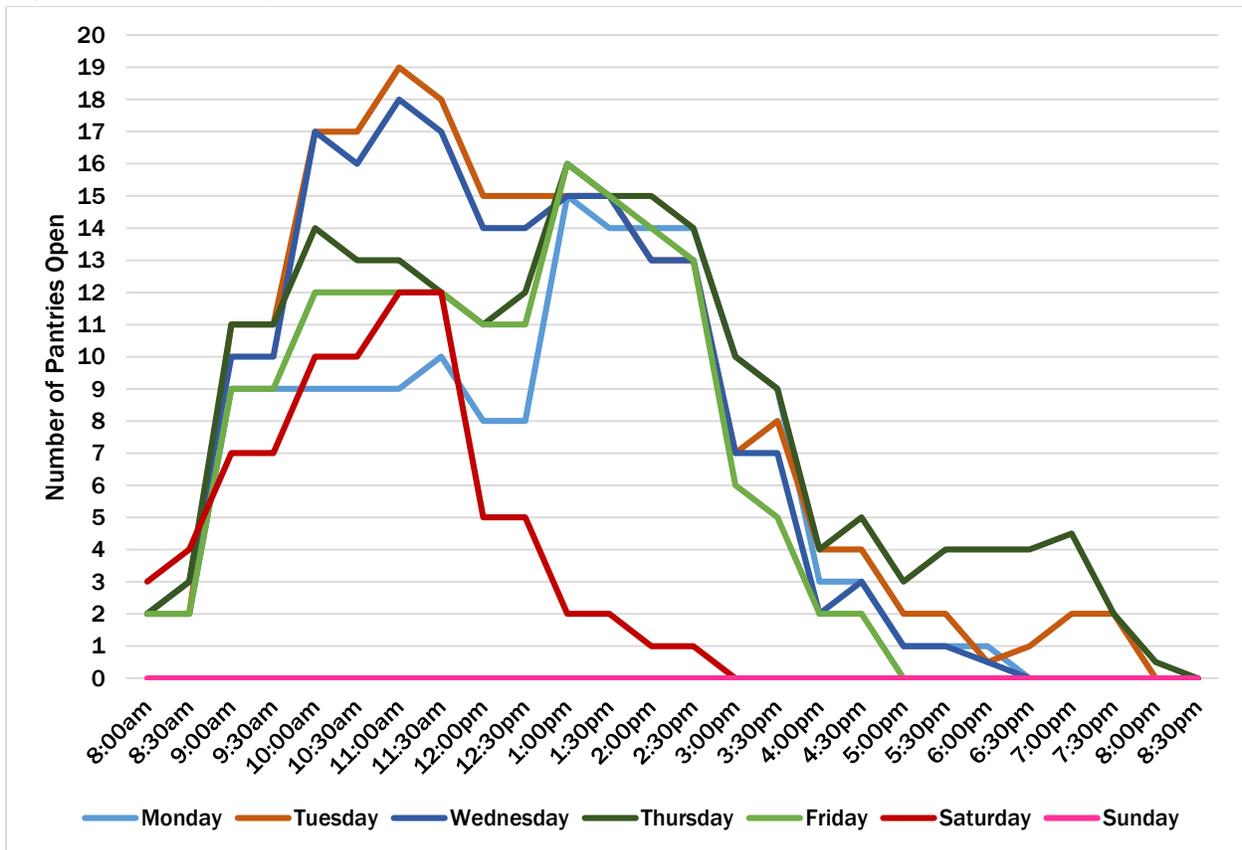


**Data Source:** Northern Illinois Food Bank.

Figure 4 presents the availability of food pantries in Lake County during a typical week. Each line represents a particular day of the week and is graphed to indicate the number of different food pantry sites available at each hour of the day. Food pantry hours vary considerably, with the earliest opening at 8 am and the latest closing after 8 pm, and days of operation spanning Monday through Saturday. Overall, food pantries in Lake County are most commonly available on weekdays during the daytime. Tuesdays give clients the most opportunity to acquire groceries, with 26 different food pantries open approximately 108 hours in total. In comparison, fewer pantries operate over the weekend, with 17 pantries open a total of only 41 hours on Saturdays and no pantries operating on Sundays. There are also a limited number of pantries that operate after 5 pm on weekdays. The varying distribution schedules of food pantry programs is an important factor when considering accessibility, as clients' circumstances may preclude them from picking up groceries during the times in which they are offered. For example, working households may only be available to pick up groceries outside of working hours or on the weekend, when fewer pantries tend to be operational.

Considering the circumstances of Lake County clients may help inform the distribution schedules of food pantries.

**Figure 4. Lake County Food Pantries: Hours of Operation**



Data Source: Northern Illinois Food Bank.

As mentioned, the geographic location of food pantries is also a critical factor affecting clients' access to food assistance. In addition to some program eligibility requirements based on geography, location is important since clients utilize different means of transportation to access the services they need. Table 1 lists the cities and townships in which Lake County food pantries operate, the total number of pantry locations, and operational hours across those locations. Across the 21 indicated locales, the number of pantries in operation ranges from one to 12, while the combined quantity of hours of services ranges from one and a half to more than 96.

**Table 1. Lake County Partner Agencies by Locales, Hours, and Number of Pantries**

City	Hours/operation per week	Number of pantry locations
Antioch	5.25	1
Barrington	30	1
Grayslake	45	4
Gurnee	41.5	2
Highland Park	9	1
Highwood	2	1
Indian Creek	3.5	1
Ingleside	85	3
Lake Bluff	12	1
Lake Forest	15	1
Lake Villa	37	2
Lake Zurich	5	2
Libertyville	17.75	4
Mundelein	6	2
North Chicago	13	5
Round Lake Beach	23	2
Round Lake Park	25	1
Wadsworth	7	1
Waukegan	96.5	12
Winthrop Harbor	1.5	1
Zion	38.5	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>518.5</b>	<b>53</b>

*Data Source: Northern Illinois Food Bank.*

*This table includes programs that provide charitable food assistance by appointment only or on an on-call basis for emergencies. In addition, while the hours are provided on a weekly basis, some programs only operate one or two weeks per month. For these reasons, the number of hours in which food pantries are staffed and in operation will vary depending on the week and number of appointments. The total number of hours provided in this table is, thus, the maximum number of hours that food pantries may distribute food in a given week in Lake County.*

## Chapter 2. Lake County Agency and Program Findings

While Northern Illinois Food Bank's agency network is distributed throughout its 13-county service area, at least 64 of these agencies are located in Lake County. These agencies are the primary vehicle for food distribution to clients in need and they vary substantially in format, characteristics, and capacity. While some agencies may be high-functioning multi-service organizations, others are smaller programs affiliated with an entity that has a different primary function, such as a church.

This chapter describes the network of agencies in Lake County, including their capacity and services, as reported in the Agency Survey of the HIA 2014 study.

### i. Agency Type, Staff, and Volunteers

While two-thirds (66%) of the food bank's agencies identify as faith-based or located in a religious institution, more than three-quarters (77%) of Lake County agencies are faith-based, suggesting that a smaller proportion of Lake County agencies are comprised of other charitable social service or governmental organizations. Staffing resources may vary significantly between agencies that are faith-based and those that are not, as religious institutions with limited funding may rely more heavily on volunteers than employed staff.<sup>8</sup>

When considering agencies that are operated exclusively by volunteers, more than half of both Lake County agencies (60%) and all agencies partnered with the food bank (52%) report having no paid staff. The median number of weekly volunteers reported by programs with volunteers in Lake County is 12, which is the same as the median number for programs with volunteers in the entire food bank service area. Programs within Lake County and within Northern Illinois Food Bank's service area report relatively similar rates of difficulty recruiting volunteers (35%, compared to 41% in the food bank service area) and difficulty retaining volunteers (29%, compared to 30% in the food bank service area). In addition to reporting on volunteer recruitment and retention needs, programs also reported on areas where additional training is needed, among either volunteers or paid staff (see Table 2). While many of the training need areas are similar to those at the food bank and national levels, Lake County programs were notably more likely to report needing additional training with summer feeding programs, which suggests that children and their families may currently be receiving limited food assistance during months when school is not in session in this area. Lake County programs were also more likely to report needing additional training with SNAP outreach and

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<sup>8</sup> According to national data from HIA 2014, only 32 percent of faith-based agencies in the Feeding America network employ paid staff, compared to 78 percent of agencies that are not faith-based nor located in a religious institution. See Feeding America, *Hunger in America 2014*, National Report. August 2014.

application assistance, as well as accessing local food resources.<sup>9</sup> The reported need for additional training around SNAP may reflect a growing demand among clients to enroll in SNAP and the agencies' desire to meet that demand.<sup>10</sup>

**Table 2. Reported Need for Additional Training among Food Programs**

Programs Reporting Need for Additional Training with...	Lake County	Northern Illinois Food Bank	Feeding America Nationally
Food safety & sanitation	47%	46%	39%
Fundraising & grant writing	43%	39%	38%
Accessing local food resources	39%	33%	33%
Nutrition education	32%	39%	39%
SNAP outreach & application assistance	31%	25%	25%
Summer feeding	31%	17%	19%

*Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey, Q49.*

## ii. SNAP Outreach and Nutrition Education

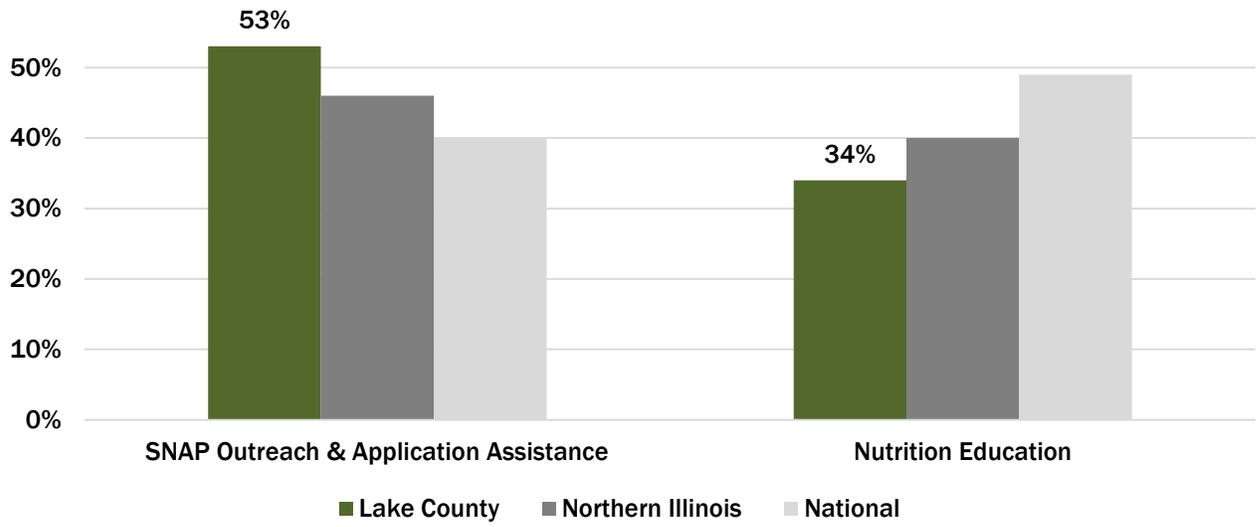
In addition to charitable food distribution, agencies and programs partnered with the food bank also carry out other roles, such as SNAP outreach or application assistance and nutrition education. Lake County agencies are slightly more likely to provide SNAP-related services (53%) than partner agencies either at the food bank level (46%) or the national level (40%), suggesting a heightened awareness of clients' potential participation in federal nutrition assistance programs within Lake County. While SNAP outreach at agencies was more prevalent, nutrition education was less common among Lake County agencies. Whereas one-third (34%) of Lake County agencies offer nutrition education activities, 40 percent of agencies within Northern Illinois Food Bank's service area and 49 percent of agencies nationally offer nutrition-related services, suggesting that there is opportunity for agencies in Lake County to engage in additional efforts to teach clients about eating healthy foods (see Figure 5).

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<sup>9</sup> Local food resources describe smaller donations from retailers and others that might not be routed through the food bank.

<sup>10</sup> Average monthly SNAP participation increased each year from 2009-2013. See U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service website: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/>

**Figure 5. Agencies Offering Services in Addition to Food Distribution**



*Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey, Q6 and Q10.*

## Chapter 3. Lake County Clients and their Households

Northern Illinois Food Bank annually serves 109,000 individuals in Lake County.<sup>11</sup> The clients seek assistance from the charitable food network in order to ensure that they have sufficient food for themselves and their families. They face unique challenges relative to the characteristics of Lake County, including educational attainment and the cost of living.

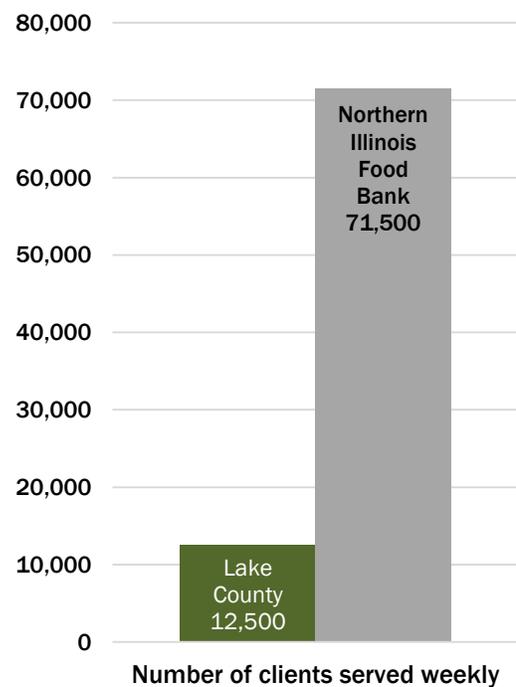
This chapter presents background information on the clients served by Northern Illinois Food Bank and its partner agencies in Lake County, as well as an exploration of the characteristics and circumstances of the clients and their households.

### i. Demographic Profile of Clients Served

Lake County has a population of approximately 703,000, comprising about five percent of the population of the state of Illinois. The proportion of county residents by age is similar to the proportions at the state level. Children under five years old make up six percent of Lake County's population, while children under 18 years old make up more than a quarter (26%) of the county's population. Senior citizens, aged 60 and older, comprise 18 percent of the population of Lake County.<sup>12</sup>

Racially and ethnically, Lake County differs somewhat from the state of Illinois. While the proportion of individuals in the county who identify as White non-Hispanic (64%) is similar to the 63 percent in the state, the population of Black, Latino and other races is

Figure 6. Weekly Unduplicated Client Count



<sup>11</sup> The number of clients served is different than the number of food insecure persons living in Lake County, as determined by Feeding America's *Map the Meal Gap* study. Some charitable food assistance recipients may not meet the U.S. Department of Agriculture's definition of food insecure. For instance, some clients may consider themselves to be food secure because they take into account any charitable food and/or federal benefits (e.g., SNAP benefits) they receive.

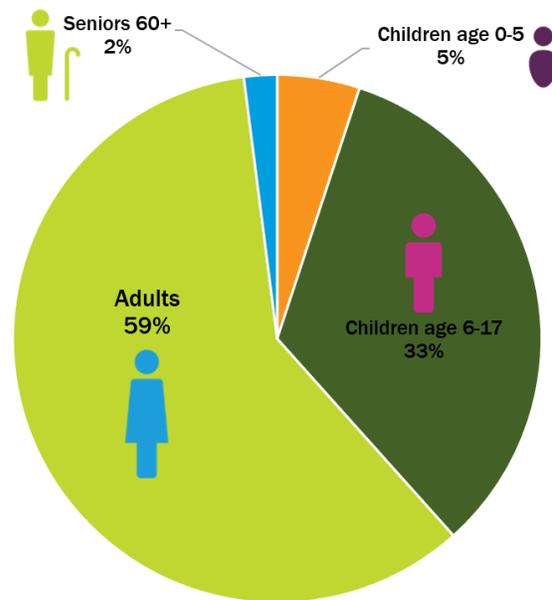
<sup>12</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, State and County QuickFacts, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau. (2013). Demographic and Housing Estimates: 2013 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

distinct. Non-Hispanic Black and Latino residents comprise seven and 21 percent of the county’s population, respectively. Notably, these numbers reflect about half the Non-Hispanic Black population at the state level, and about a quarter more Latino residents than at the state level (proportionally). The Asian population in Lake County is roughly commensurate with their presence in Illinois, making up seven percent and five percent, respectively.<sup>13</sup>

The population of clients seeking the services of charitable food assistance programs is a unique subset in Lake County. Using HIA 2014 data, Northern Illinois Food Bank serves an estimated 109,000 unique or “unduplicated” individuals in 27,200 households each year in Lake County. Many clients receive food multiple times during the year, so estimating each time clients are reached through food distributions yields a “duplicated” estimate of 838,300 individual client interactions each year through food programs in this county. Based on these figures, each client in Lake County makes, on average, more than seven visits to food programs each year, though the patterns of individual households vary based on unique personal circumstances. This average number of visits per client is a rate just under that of the food bank and state. Figure 6 shows the number of clients served in a typical week by the food bank in Lake County, relative to those in the entire service area. For comparison the national number of clients served in a typical week is nearly 5.4 million.

The characteristics of clients of Northern Illinois Food Bank in Lake County are striking, in comparison to the general population. On an annual level, children comprise nearly 39 percent of all clients served in Lake County; more than 39,000 children are served annually, representing a substantial portion of the 200,000 children served in the food bank’s entire service area.<sup>14</sup> The majority of the children served in Lake County are older children between the ages of 6 and 17. Children are disproportionately served as clients, relative to their overall representation in Lake County, and there are likely even higher numbers of children served since the count is probably an underestimate (for reasons described in Chapter 1, Section v.). In contrast, just 2,000 of the food

**Figure 7. Individual Clients by Age**



*Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q3.*

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

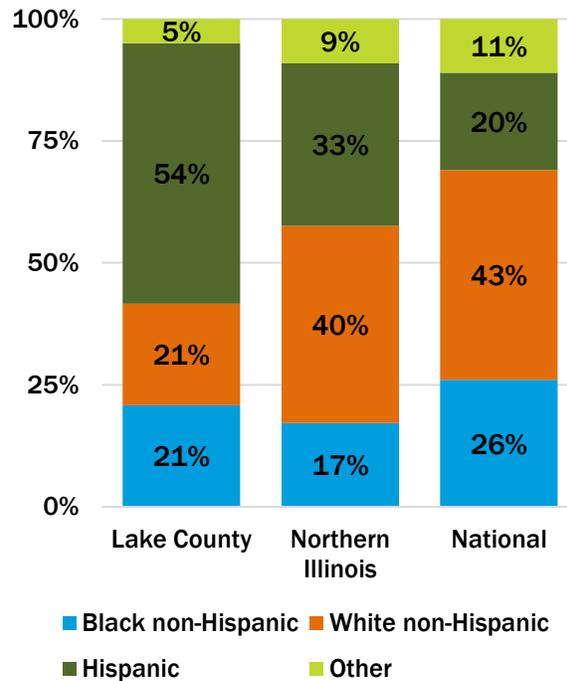
<sup>14</sup> Throughout the report, various data points that have been summed may be higher than their component parts, due to rounding.

bank's 50,000 senior clients are in Lake County. Of the estimated 123,000 senior individuals residing in Lake County, under two percent are served by the food bank.<sup>15</sup> It is unclear why the number of senior clients reached in Lake County is low, relative to their overall representation. Possible explanations include that seniors are more likely to have mobility issues and therefore not able to access charitable food services, or that seniors struggling with hunger may not be aware of the resources in the community, or may experience reticence about accessing the services.

Clients are also racially and ethnically diverse. White non-Hispanic clients comprise 21 percent of the total client population served by Northern Illinois Food Bank in Lake County; 64 percent of the population of Lake County identifies as White non-Hispanic. Five percent of all clients identify as unclassified other races/ethnicities, compared to nine percent in the food bank's overall service area. While Black non-Hispanic residents comprise seven percent of the total population of Lake County, they make up more than a fifth (21%) of food bank clients in the county, a frequency slightly exceeding the proportion in the food bank's entire service area (17%). Hispanic clients are similarly over-represented, by a considerable magnitude, relative to their numbers in the county population; they comprise more than half (54%) of food bank clients in Lake County and just 21 percent of the overall county population.<sup>16</sup>

Between 1990 and the present, the Latino population, as a percent of the entire population in Lake County, has grown nearly 200 percent.<sup>17</sup> This growth is consistent with changing demographics throughout the county in the same period. The fact that so many Latinos in Lake County are turning to charitable food assistance may reflect the unique challenges within this population. Latinos were hit particularly hard by the recent recession. According to an analysis of data from the U.S. Census

**Figure 8. Client Race/Ethnicity**



*Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q4.*

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2013). Demographic and Housing Estimates: 2013 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Pew Research Hispanic Trends Project, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/states/county/17097/>

Bureau by the Pew Hispanic Center, 37 percent of children in poverty in 2010 were Latino.<sup>18</sup> This makes them the most impoverished children of any racial or ethnic group. The close connection between poverty and food insecurity may help explain the high need in Lake County. The high number of Latino clients served in Lake County may also be related to the location of food pantries and where Latinos are concentrated. For example, nearly one-quarter (23%) of Northern Illinois Food Bank's Lake County agencies are located in Waukegan, a municipality whose population is 53 percent Latino.<sup>19</sup>

## **ii. Educational Attainment among Client Households**

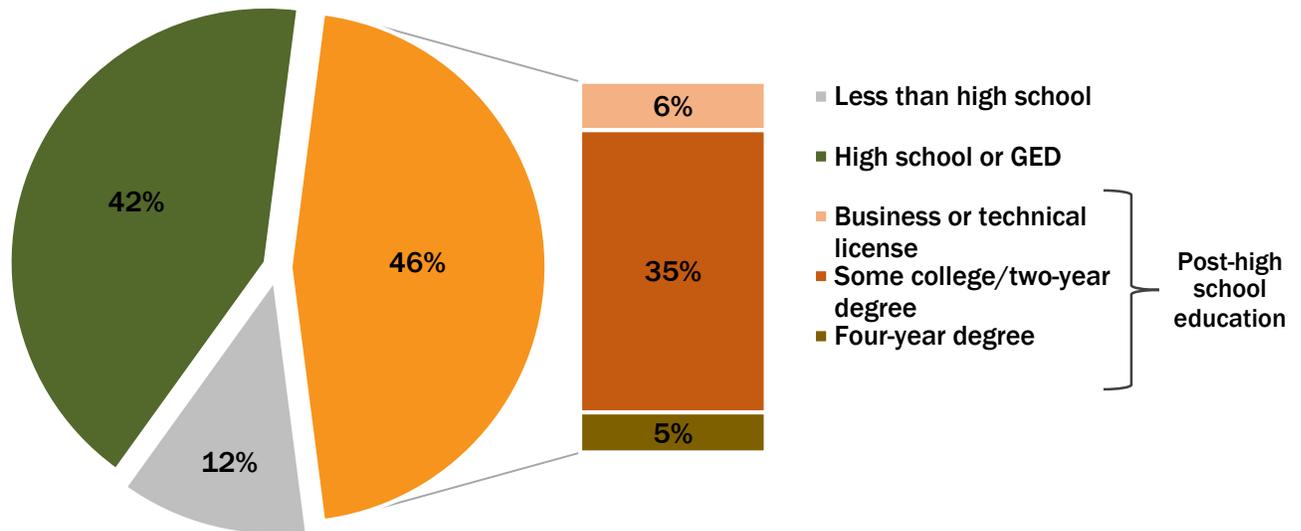
Client households in Lake County have similar levels of educational attainment compared to client households across the national Feeding America network. In Lake County, the majority (89%) of client households contain a member with at least a high school diploma or general equivalency diploma (GED), compared to 86 percent of client households nationally. When considering the percentage of households that contain a member with a post-high school education, there is a small difference, though still comparable: 46 percent of Lake County client households versus 41 percent of client households nationally. The nearly half of client households in Lake County with a post-high school education include those that have a business, trade, or technical license, certificate, or degree (6%), some college or a two-year degree (35%), or a four-year degree (5%).

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<sup>18</sup> Lopez, Mark Hugo and Gabriel Velasco. "Childhood Poverty Among Hispanics Sets Record, Leads Nation." Pew Research Hispanic Trends Project. (September 28, 2011). <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2011/09/28/childhood-poverty-among-hispanics-sets-record-leads-nation/>

<sup>19</sup> Data come from the 2010 United States Census; analysis by the Latino Policy Forum <http://www2.illinois.gov/gov/latino-heritage/Pages/group-data.aspx>

**Figure 9. Highest Education Level Attained in Household (Lake County)**



*Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q5.*

In Lake County, client households are less likely to have a college-educated member than all client households throughout the national network. Five percent of Lake County client households have a member with a four-year degree. This rate is considerably lower than the percentage of client households throughout the national network who have a member with a four-year degree (10%) and even more striking compared to the general Lake County population, where nearly half (43%) of residents age 25 and older have a four-year degree or higher, and in the United States as a whole (30%).<sup>20</sup> The fact that client households in Lake County are slightly more likely to have someone with post-secondary education than at the national level, but noticeably less likely to have someone with a college degree, may reflect the relative dearth of degree programs in the county. Of the seven educational institutions located in the county reported by the county government’s website, four offer Bachelor’s degrees, and three offer Associate’s degrees and/or Certificate programs.<sup>21</sup> Another possible explanation is to look at educational attainment relative to the demographic composition of the county’s clients. While 43 percent of Lake County residents age 25 and older have a four-year degree or higher, only eight percent of Latino residents in the same category have at least a four-year degree.<sup>22</sup> The fact that more than half of Lake County clients are Latino contributes to a lower overall rate.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2013). Demographic and Housing Estimates: 2013 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table DP02.

<sup>21</sup> Official government site of Lake County, Illinois

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2013). Demographic and Housing Estimates: 2013 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table B15002I.

In addition to inquiring about the highest level of household education, the Client Survey also inquired about the student status of any adult clients. In Lake County, nearly seven percent of adult clients are currently enrolled in school, the vast majority of whom are enrolled full-time, indicating that client households are continually working to improve their educational levels. The percentage of adult clients currently enrolled in school is slightly lower in Lake County than for the food bank's service area (8%) and for the national network (10%). The adult clients may be enrolled in higher education, or they may be in school to complete credits for their high school diploma or GED. Regardless, further educational attainment may provide client households with increased access to employment opportunities and financial security in the long-term.

Client households in Lake County have similar levels of education to client households throughout the national network and are less likely to report struggling to afford school. This may be related to the fact that there are fewer clients enrolled in school, and those who attend are full-time students. Among client households in Lake, under a quarter (24%) reported having to choose between paying for education expenses and paying for food in the past 12 months, a rate considerably lower than in Northern Illinois Food Bank's service area (37%) and throughout the national network (31%). One out of nine (11%) Lake County client households reported having to make this choice every month, compared to 17 percent in Northern Illinois Food Bank's service area, and 14 percent nationally. Still, even with a lower rate of tradeoff, tuition and course materials can become a significant financial burden in the short-term for low-income families.

### **iii. Client Household Employment**

Client households in Lake County are considerably more likely to have an employed member than client households throughout the national network; however, they face many of the same challenges, such as instability in employment and potential difficulty in accessing charitable food services that are primarily open during business hours. The vast majority (87%) of Lake County client households have at least one member who was employed in the past year. Client households without an employed member in the past year either were unemployed during this period or were out of the workforce for reasons such as retirement, health challenges, or caregiving responsibilities. The rate of employment in the past year among Lake County client households is strikingly higher than the rate for client households nationally (54%), as well as the rate for Northern Illinois Food Bank's service area (77%).

In addition, client households in Lake County were more likely to report working full-time in the past year than those in the national network or food bank service area. Survey respondents were asked to report the typical hours worked per week among any household members with employment in the past year. Among Lake County client households with employment in the past year, more than two-thirds (68%) reported that the longest-employed household member, or the person who had worked the greatest number of months in the past year, worked more than 30 hours per week. The rates of full-time employment among client households with employment in

the national network (43%) and the food bank's service area (57%) were much lower. Although the majority of Lake County client households report full-time employment, nearly one-third (32%) of those with employment were relying on part-time work to support the household.

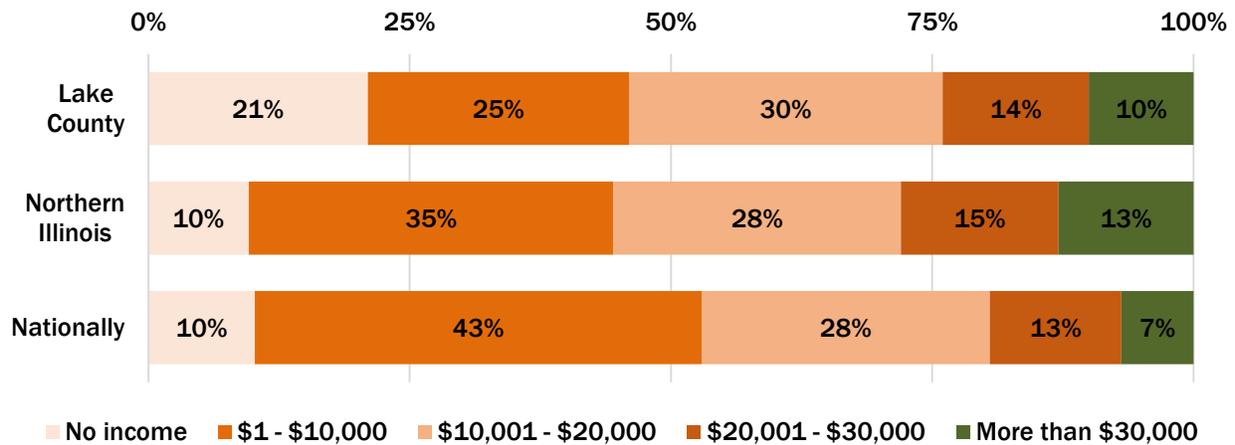
Despite a high rate of labor force participation in the prior year, in many cases, employment status over a 12-month period was unstable: just over half (59%) of client households in Lake County reported that at least one member had employment in the prior four weeks (compared to 52 percent for the food bank's service area and 34 percent nationally), meaning that, at least in the year prior to data collection, the employment status of many client households fluctuated. There are many potential reasons for the change in employment status between the yearly and monthly figures. Some of these include recent job loss, temporary furlough, health problems, or other competing responsibilities, such as caregiving or education.

In addition to unstable employment, client households in Lake County may face challenges in visiting local food programs given their common days and hours of operation. As previously discussed, the days of operation among food pantries in this county span Mondays through Saturdays (see Chapter 1, section viii). In addition, the food pantries distribute food across a wide range of hours, with some starting as early as 8:00 am and others distributing as late as 8:00 pm. Although food pantries in this county offer diverse distribution times, they more commonly operate during weekday mornings. The days and hours of operation of charitable food programs may play a role in households' abilities to seek food assistance, especially the more than three-quarters (87%) of client households in this county that had employment in the past year. For these client households and other working families that reside in the county, the evening and weekend food distributions may be the only or most convenient option, and these options are more limited for clients seeking assistance in Lake County.

#### **iv. Client Household Income and the Cost of Living**

Although client households in this county generally have education and relatively high levels of employment, they are struggling to earn enough to meet their basic needs, including food and housing. Nine out of ten (90%) client households in Lake County earn an annual income of \$30,000 or less, with more than three-quarters (76%) earning \$20,000 or less. Additionally, one in five (21%) client households reports no income, suggesting particularly serious challenges, such as job loss. The low income levels reported in Lake County are similar to those of client households in the wider food bank service area and nationally (see Figure 10). For instance, 87 percent of client households in the larger service area and 93 percent of client households nationally report annual incomes that are at or below \$30,000.

**Figure 10. Client Household Annual Income**



Data Source: *Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q23.*

In contrast, the local economy in Lake County is characterized in part by the relatively high median income and high wages required to be self-sufficient. In 2013, the median household income in Lake County was \$74,869,<sup>23</sup> substantially higher than the national median household income of \$51,939.<sup>24</sup> A comparison of poverty rates between client households and the general population in this county provides further insight into the heightened economic challenges experienced by client households. Whereas nearly two-thirds (65%) of client households in Lake County have incomes that are at or below the poverty line, just over seven percent of families in the general population in this area live in poverty.<sup>25</sup> As such, the households that receive food assistance from the charitable sector are particularly likely to struggle to afford all of their expenses.

Furthermore, most client households in Lake County are earning wages that are too low to be self-sufficient in the local economy. The Self-Sufficiency Standard is a tool that estimates the wage needed to cover a family’s basic needs, including housing, transportation, food, and personal care items, without receiving public or private assistance, in various geographic regions based on local costs. In 2009, the Self-Sufficiency Standard in Lake County was \$27.53 per hour for a family of three, comprised of an adult, a preschooler, and a school-aged child.<sup>26</sup> This equates to more than

<sup>23</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2013). Selected Population Profile in the United States: 2013 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

<sup>24</sup> DeNavas-Walt, Carmen and Bernadette D. Proctor, U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P60-249, *Income and Poverty in the United States: 2013*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 2014.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2013). Selected Population Profile in the United States: 2013 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

<sup>26</sup> Social Impact Research Center at the Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights. (2009). *Getting By & Getting Ahead: The 2009 Illinois Self-Sufficiency Standard.*

\$61,000 per year for a family of three.<sup>27</sup> The Self-Sufficiency Wage in Lake County is notably higher than that of the state of Illinois (\$23.22) and Chicago (\$24.80). In fact, Lake County has the second highest Self-Sufficiency Wage of any location in Illinois; DuPage County is the only geographic area in Illinois with a higher wage necessary to be self-sufficient (\$29.31). Client households in Lake County are at a particular disadvantage as they are facing high living expenses in conjunction with low incomes.

## v. Housing

While the majority of Lake County households report residing in stable housing, many others report various transient living situations. Specifically, 83 percent of client households reside in non-temporary housing, which is housing that has the potential to be long-term, such as a house or apartment. However, one in six (17%) client households reports temporary housing situations, which may include living in a shelter, rented room, motel, or vehicle, or living on the streets. The percentage of client households reporting temporary housing in Lake County is considerably higher than the rates for the national network (7%) and Northern Illinois Food Bank's service area (4%), suggesting that obtaining stable housing is particularly challenging in Lake County.

One potential explanation for the high rate of temporary housing arrangements among Lake County client households is the local cost of housing. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, residents of Lake County encounter high rent payments as compared to the state of Illinois. When living on minimal incomes, high rent may make it difficult to afford housing. For example, in the state of Illinois, the hourly wage necessary to afford the Fair Market Rent on a two-bedroom apartment is \$17.02, which equates to less than \$36,000 annually.<sup>28</sup> In Lake County specifically, an individual or family would need to earn at least \$18.58 per hour to afford the Fair Market Rent on the same type of housing, which translates into \$38,640 annually.<sup>29</sup> Given that an overwhelming majority of client households report annual incomes at or below \$30,000, nearly all recipients of charitable food assistance in Lake County are likely unable to afford the local cost of housing.

In some cases, client households may be dedicating most or all of their income to housing. This leaves them with little or no budget available to purchase food and other necessities, items that are also likely to be more expensive in an area with a generally high cost of living and higher average food costs compared to other counties within the state.<sup>30</sup> Research conducted by the National Low

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<sup>27</sup> Social Impact Research Center at the Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights. (2009). Lake County. Accessed at: [http://ilpovertyreport.org/sites/default/files/uploads/images/county\\_pdfs/lake\\_0.pdf](http://ilpovertyreport.org/sites/default/files/uploads/images/county_pdfs/lake_0.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> National Low Income Housing Coalition. (2013). Illinois. [http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/oor/2013-OOR-IL\\_0.pdf](http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/oor/2013-OOR-IL_0.pdf)

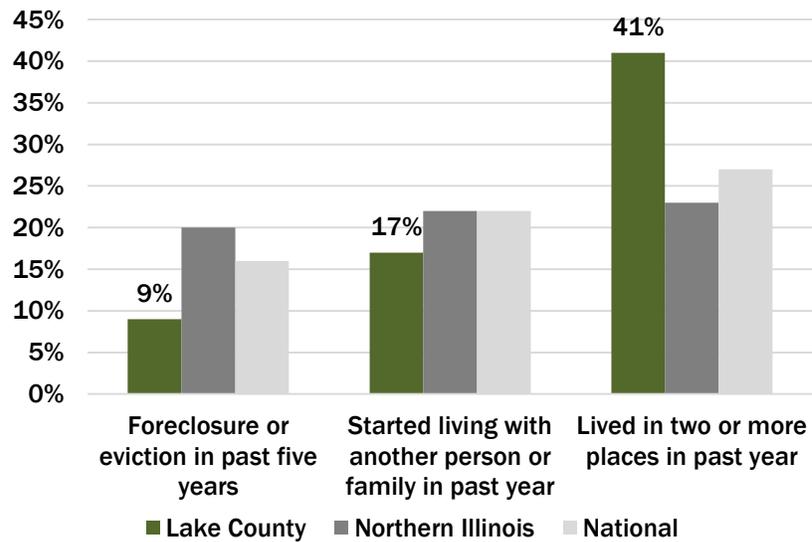
<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Feeding America's *Map the Meal Gap* (2014) finds that in 2012, the average meal cost in Lake County (\$2.76) was higher than that of the state of Illinois (\$2.46) and slightly higher than the national average (\$2.74). In other words, food

Income Housing Coalition provides evidence that low-income families often considerably restrict their budgets for other necessities in order to afford housing. When compared to low-income families that have affordable rents, low-income families that need to spend over half of their income on housing were found to spend approximately one-third less of their income on food, half as much on clothing, and more than three-quarters less on medical care.<sup>31</sup> This suggests that many families earning low incomes are sacrificing some of their basic needs to have a place to live.

In other cases, client households may experience changes in their living situation as a result of financial challenges. Survey respondents in Lake County report multiple types of recent housing transitions (see Figure 11). For instance, 41 percent of individuals who participated in the study in this county report that they lived in two or more places in the past year, compared to approximately one in four respondents both nationally (27%) and in the larger food bank service area (23%). In addition, one in six (17%) individuals who participated in the study in Lake County report that they started living with another person or family in the past year, possibly because they had difficulty affording a place to live on their own. This rate is slightly lower than that of survey respondents nationally (20%) and for Northern Illinois Food Bank’s full service area (22%), but still indicates that some individuals in Lake County are seeking different housing arrangements as a result of financial challenges.

**Figure 11. Recent Housing Transitions by Respondent**



Data Source: *Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q17, Q20, and Q21.*

Furthermore, in Lake County, nearly one in ten (9%) survey respondents has experienced foreclosure or eviction in the past five years. This foreclosure rate is lower than that of survey respondents nationally (16%) and in Northern Illinois Food Bank’s service area more broadly (20%), but may reflect the relatively high rate of temporary housing arrangements among Lake County client households. That is, a smaller proportion of client households in Lake County, compared to those nationally or in the food bank service area, report residing in houses or other types of stable

prices in Lake County were 12 percent higher than the state average, ranking it in the top six percent of counties with the highest average meal cost in Illinois.

<sup>31</sup> Dewan, Shaila. “In Many Cities, Rent is Rising Out of Reach of Middle Class.” *New York Times*. (April 14, 2014). <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/15/business/more-renters-find-30-affordability-ratio-unattainable.html? r=2>

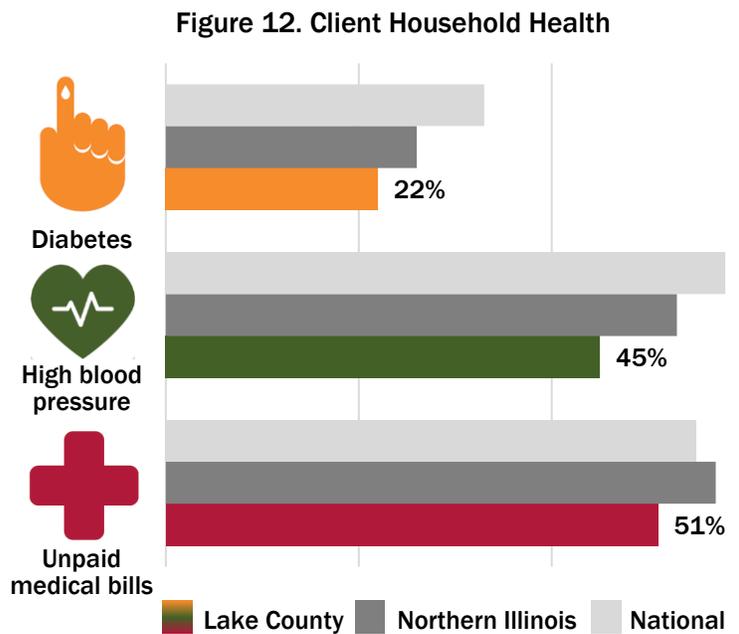
housing for which foreclosure or eviction can occur. Overall, the relatively high rates of housing transitions indicate that securing affordable housing is a common challenge in Lake County among recipients of the charitable food network.

## vi. Health Adversity

Lake County client households report a variety of challenges related to their health and medical care, which likely have negative implications in terms of their workforce participation and income available for food and other necessities. When asked to rate their own health status, 22 percent of survey respondents in this county indicated that they have fair or poor health. Furthermore, nearly one in eight (12%) respondents reports that another member in their household is in poor health. In some cases, the poor health status of a household member may affect his or her ability to seek or maintain employment.

In addition to health status, the study inquired about the presence of select health conditions in the household. More than one in five (22%) client households in Lake County has at least one member with diabetes.

While this rate is notably lower than that for client households nationally (33%), it is only slightly lower than that of client households in Northern Illinois Food Bank’s full service area (26%). Furthermore, nearly one in every two (45%) Lake County client households has at least one member with high blood pressure, although this is considerably lower than the rates for client households nationally (58%) and in the food bank’s service area (53%). Since diet plays a critical role in management of both diabetes and high blood pressure, food insecurity and lack of nutrition likely have detrimental effects on individuals’ ability to properly manage these health conditions. The charitable food assistance network provides them with more access to food, but increased nutrition education efforts may be needed to better address the links between nutrition and health.



Data Source: *Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q14A-B and Q24.*

In alignment with the relatively high rates of health challenges they are facing, Lake County client households also report difficulties in affording their health care expenses. Half (51%) of Lake County client households report having unpaid medical bills, which indicates that client households in this county are facing a comparable level of medical debt as are those nationally (55%) and in the food bank’s 13-county service area (57%). Given their health challenges and medical debt, client

households in Lake County often have to make difficult decisions between paying for food and medical care or medicine. Fifty-one percent of Lake County client households make this choice each year, compared to 66 percent of client households nationally and 62 percent of client households in Northern Illinois Food Bank's full service area.

Financial burden related to healthcare can be exacerbated by living without healthcare coverage. At the time of the survey, more than half (55%) of Lake County client households reported that they did not have any members with health insurance. This rate is markedly higher than that of the food bank's service area (37%), and it is nearly twice that of client households nationally (29%). Lack of access to healthcare coverage may mean that some client households need to pay high out of pocket costs for their medical care. It may also mean that some client households delay receiving treatment for their health conditions given the high cost of medical care. Since the Client Survey was administered prior to the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, it is unclear how client households in this county have been affected by recent health care reforms.<sup>32</sup> Additional research is needed to understand whether client households have increased access to healthcare coverage and, if so, whether they have seen any recent improvements in their health status.

## **vii. Food Insecurity and Coping Strategies**

While the reported rate of food insecurity among client households in Lake County is considerably lower than the national rate, Lake County client households' utilization of coping strategies for managing food insecurity is consistent with client households across the national network. In Lake County, 71 percent of client households identify as food insecure, which is notably less than within Northern Illinois Food Bank's service area (84%), and throughout the Feeding America network (85%). However, Lake County client households utilize coping strategies at a similar rate as the client population within the food bank's service area and across the national network. For example, 38 percent of Lake County client households wait until they run out of food before visiting a food program, roughly the same as the population within the food bank's service area (42%), and the national population (37%). Consequently, Lake County client households report a similar rate for planning to seek charitable food assistance on a regular basis to supplement their monthly food budget as that of their peers in adjacent counties and across the nation. The high costs of living in Lake County and the resulting necessity of resource management may be contributing to this elevated reliance on charitable food assistance within the county.

Lake County client households' consistency with those in Northern Illinois Food Bank's full service area and the national network extends to other coping mechanisms as well. Client households in

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<sup>32</sup> The Affordable Care Act, which expands healthcare insurance coverage options for adults and children, particularly those who previously did not have health insurance, went into effect after the fielding period of the Client Survey.

Lake County are about as likely to sell or pawn personal property to buy food (34%) as those in Northern Illinois (40%) and the national population (35%). While the ability to sell one's property may provide a short-term solution for managing competing expenses, it may also pose complications down the line, particularly if the asset being sold (e.g., a vehicle) could potentially hurt a household's chances of becoming more food secure in the future (e.g., the ability to commute to a job or drive to a grocery store/food pantry).

Another strategy that is commonly employed by Lake County client households, as well as those elsewhere, is receiving help from family or friends. Nearly half (49%) of Lake County client households report receiving help from family or friends in the past year, slightly less than Northern Illinois Food Bank client households (55%) and client households nationally (53%). The presence of a supportive social network is associated with reduced risks of poverty and food insecurity; consequently, the use of this coping strategy among client households may be perceived as a positive practice.

Lake County client households were much less likely to report purchasing the cheapest food available, even if they knew it was not the healthiest option, in an effort to provide enough food for the household (56% in Lake County, versus 77% among food bank client households and 79% of client households nationally). This practice could lead to serious health implications for vulnerable clients, particularly those with diabetes or hypertension, two conditions which require specific, healthy foods. Forty-five percent of Lake County client households report watering down food or drinks, a rate that tracks roughly to food bank and national levels (40%). This coping strategy could also present health implications, particularly for children and seniors, as nutrition among these two vulnerable groups may be sacrificed when food or drinks are diluted.

## **viii. Spending Tradeoffs**

Client households in Lake County report making difficult decisions as they budget how to allocate their resources to meet their basic needs. The study specifically inquired about whether client households make tradeoffs between food and five other types of core living expenses: utilities, transportation, housing, medical care, and education. In Lake County, client households report weighing each of these choices each year, although at lower rates than client households in the food bank service area and nationally (see Figure 13). The lower rates of spending tradeoffs among client households in Lake County may reflect their relatively high rates of employment and income levels. Despite working and earning incomes, however, Lake County client households still struggle to afford all of their necessities.

Among client households in Lake County, two of the three most commonly reported spending tradeoffs relate to the cost of accommodation (housing and utilities). As might be expected in a region with a high cost of living, two-thirds (67%) of client households in Lake County face the choice between paying for food and paying for utilities, and half (50%) make the tradeoff between food and housing. Showing another dimension of the challenges in affording housing in Lake

County, client households reported relatively high rates of temporary housing arrangements and housing transitions.<sup>33</sup>

**Figure 13. Client Household Tradeoffs: Comparing Lake County to Food Bank and National Estimates**



Data Source: *Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q25-29.*

Other necessities for general well-being and quality of life include the ability to pay for transportation and for medical care. Half (51%) of client households in Lake County make tradeoffs between food and medical care each year. Notably, this is the same rate as the percentage of client households in Lake County with unpaid medical bills.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, nearly half of client households in Lake County (46%) make the choice between food and transportation. The cost of transportation in Lake County may be costly since its public transportation network is not as extensive as in the adjacent metro area (Chicago) and because distances between sites are greater in suburban areas. As a result, client households may be more reliant on vehicles and gas costs, as opposed to more affordable, but more time-consuming, public transportation.

Education is cited by nearly one-quarter (24%) of Lake County client households as being an expense that competes with food when they are allocating resources. While increased educational attainment among household members may increase the household’s employment prospects and earning potential in the long term, the costs of tuition and course materials for household members of any age can cause short-term financial stress.

Trading off between food and other necessities is one of many coping strategies that food bank client households may be utilizing when faced with the dilemma of how to secure enough food. Clients and their households have many competing needs and may be drawing on various resources, including charitable food assistance, to meet those needs. For example, in addition to receiving

<sup>33</sup> See Section V. Housing

<sup>34</sup> See Section VI. Health Adversity

assistance at charitable food programs, many client households in Lake County and across the nation are also relying on resources from federal nutrition programs.

## **ix. Client Household Participation in Federal Programs**

Federal nutrition programs available to low-income client households include the Supplemental Nutrition Program (SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Additionally, client households with children may be participants in one or both of the federal school meal programs: the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP).

Of all of the federal nutrition assistance programs, SNAP is the largest, providing eligible households with monthly benefit allotments through an electronic benefits (EBT) card. Eligibility and participation rules vary by state, generally limited to households below a certain income or with a maximum amount of financial assets. In Illinois, SNAP eligibility is restricted to households with gross incomes at or below 130 percent of the poverty level (\$30,615 for a family of four in 2013<sup>35</sup>). The size of the SNAP benefit fluctuates with household size and net income. Over half (51%) of Lake County client households report currently receiving SNAP at the time of assessment. This rate is just under that of the food bank (53%) and the national level (55%). Among the half (49%) of client households in Lake County not receiving SNAP, an estimated 80 percent are potentially income-eligible. This equates to about two in five (40%) client households in Lake County that are not receiving SNAP benefits but are potentially eligible, based on reported income and household size. It is important to note, however, that other factors such as a household's overall assets, net income, or restrictions based on household composition are also used to determine eligibility for participation, and these elements were not assessed in the HIA 2014 study.

Similar to SNAP in its distribution of funds, WIC targets low-income pregnant and post-partum women and children up to age five who are at nutritional risk. In Illinois, as in most states, households with gross incomes at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty guidelines are eligible for WIC. In addition, individual families must be determined by a health professional to be at nutritional risk to be eligible.<sup>36</sup> Participation in WIC in Lake County – 24 percent of all client households – is higher than the food bank level (18%) and the national level (12%). It is important to note, however, that the rate of participation is calculated out of all client households, rather than just those with qualifying members (e.g., pregnant women, children).

In addition to WIC, children in low-income households may also be eligible for a free or reduced-price lunch through NSLP and/or free or reduced-price breakfast through SBP, both federal

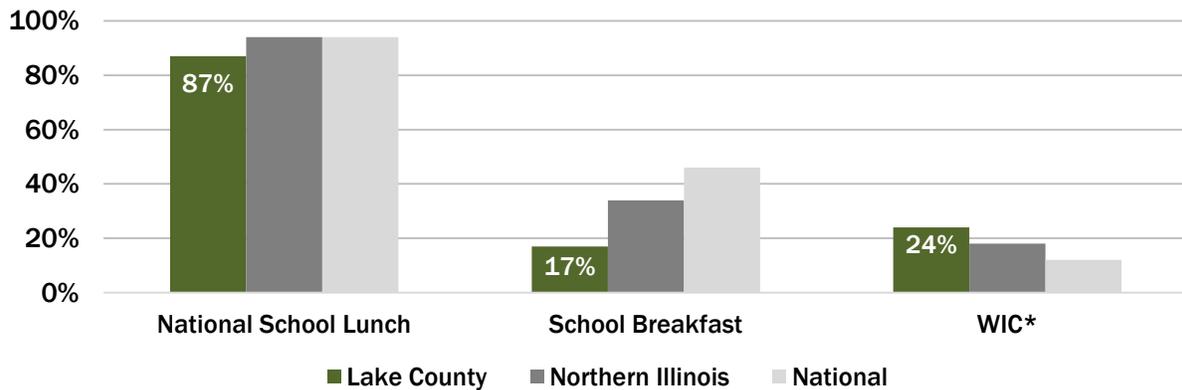
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<sup>35</sup> *Federal Register*, “2013 Poverty Guidelines,” Vol. 78, No. 16, January 24, 2013, pp. 5182-5183.

<sup>36</sup> See Benefit Details: <http://www.benefits.gov/benefits/benefit-details/2058>

programs. Families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level qualify for a free lunch or breakfast, and families with incomes between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty level qualify for a reduced-price lunch or breakfast.<sup>37</sup> Eighty-seven percent of client households in Lake County with school-aged children participate in the NSLP, but only 17 percent participate in SBP. While both school lunch and school breakfast participation are lower in Lake County than at the food bank level and nationally, the rate of SBP participation is particularly low comparatively – just half the rate for the Northern Illinois Food Bank service area (34%) and less than half the national rate (46%).

**Figure 14. Household Participation in Federal Nutrition Programs Targeted at Children**



Data Source: *Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q34-35.*

**NOTE:** WIC participation is among all households, while free or reduced-price lunch or breakfast is among households with school-aged children.

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<sup>37</sup> See “School Meals” on U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service website: [www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/income-eligibility-guidelines](http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/income-eligibility-guidelines)

## Chapter 4. Opportunity for Further Exploration: Connecting Need with Resources

One area for continued research is to pinpoint geographic areas that are currently being underserved, and identify corresponding operational changes that could potentially be implemented to better address the need in these areas. Doing so would involve analyzing the current need and existing resources within a given area.

This chapter describes an auxiliary analysis undertaken to serve as another source of data regarding the supply of services and potential gaps.

The Feeding America national office network development team and Northern Illinois Food Bank previously conducted an analysis, known as *Proximity of Resources and Need (PRAN)*, to assess the connections between the food bank's existing food distribution sites and the local food insecure population, with the intention of using the results to inform the selection of the locations and types of future distribution sites within the food bank's 13-county service area, including Lake County. Through an interactive map, PRAN identifies regions that are currently being underserved in terms of the amount of food distributed and the number and locations of distribution sites in relation to the individuals in need. In addition, PRAN reveals which geographic areas are well-served, meaning that individuals and families coping with food insecurity have convenient access and means of transportation to local food programs.

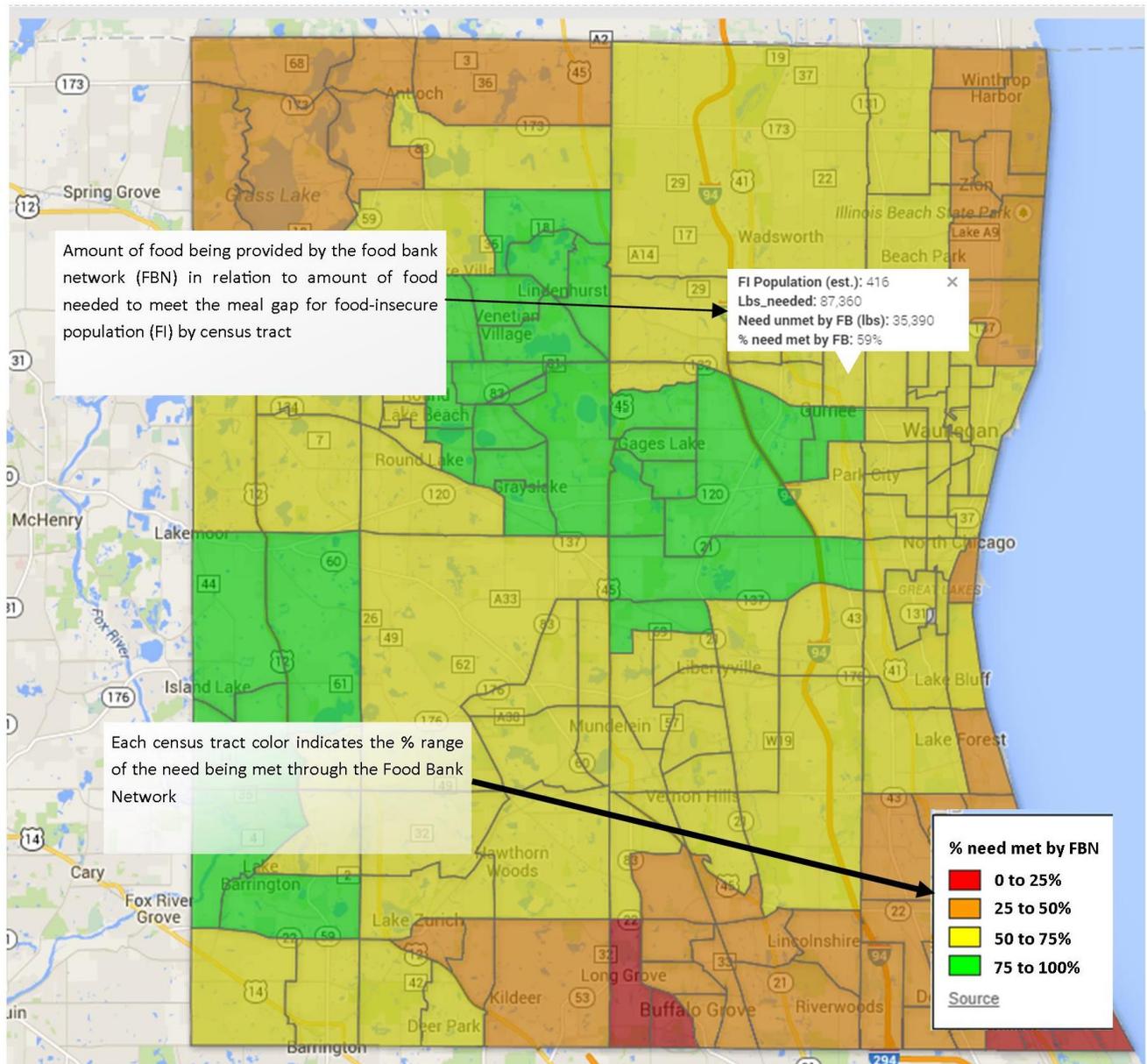
The PRAN analysis takes into account four factors that contribute to the scope and reach of charitable food programs in particular communities:

1. The number of food insecure persons in each area, as determined through Feeding America's *Map the Meal Gap* study.
2. The number of pounds of food that are currently being distributed in each area, according to the food bank's administrative records.
3. The number and addresses of partner agencies that distribute food in each area, based on the food bank's internal database.
4. The level of access to these various distribution sites based on the local modes of transportation, as identified through mapping.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Through mapping the specific locations of partner agencies and determining the number of miles between locations, the PRAN analysis identifies the extent to which community members can conveniently travel to the agencies by foot, car, or public transit. While the specific addresses of individuals in need are unknown, the interactive mapping tool helps to identify potential transportation issues for those who may not have access to a car or convenient access to public transit, such as a bus or train.

**Figure 15. Proximity of Resources and Need – Lake County**



**Data Source:** Proximity of Resources and Need.

Together, these factors have been used to identify areas within the county that may have the highest degree of unmet need. In Lake County, PRAN indicates that while the central region and southwestern corner of the county have a high amount of resources relative to the local level of need, this is not the case for the other corners of the county, particularly the southeastern region (see Figure 15). Thus, the food bank may wish to consider the possibilities of partnering with more

agencies, distributing more food, or conducting more targeted outreach in the southeastern, northeastern, and northwestern corners of its service area.

While the PRAN analysis provides a strong starting point for investigating the level of need among sub-county regions, there are limitations to the analysis to be considered. For one, it is not known whether those who experience food insecurity consider the receipt of charitable food assistance when assessing their situation (i.e., whether their receipt of charitable food assistance results in them feeling more food secure). As a result, offsetting the level of need by the amount of food distributed may not accurately reflect the circumstances in the regions in question, particularly as environmental factors such as unemployment and poverty are strong indicators of food insecurity, both of which cannot be alleviated by increased food distribution alone.

Additionally, it is possible that food insecure individuals may reside in a particular region of the county, but commute and work near another region; while there may be food distribution sites in either of the two regions, programs' hours of operation, transit options, and overall accessibility may prevent clients from reaching these services, even if the region is evidently meeting the local need. Other factors such as these may need to be evaluated to more accurately assess the relationship between service and need in each community.

## Chapter 5. Summary & Implications

### i. Major Trends and Opportunities for Action

The findings from *Hunger in America 2014*, and specifically those pertaining to Lake County, illustrate the breadth of the need that Northern Illinois Food Bank's network of agencies is working to address. Despite its relative wealth and high property values, many Lake County clients face a variety of challenges as they cope with trying to secure enough food for themselves and their families.

This chapter serves as a summary of the findings presented in previous chapters, identifying the major trends observed and accompanying opportunities for action.

#### ***Although older children comprise a substantial percentage of charitable food recipients in Lake County, a low number of seniors are reached.***

Each year, approximately 109,000 individuals are served in Lake County, among which nearly four out of ten are children. Yet, just two percent of clients are seniors aged 60 and older, which is a low participation rate given that seniors comprise more than one-sixth of the county population. This percentage, however, may not fully capture the senior population that is reached by Northern Illinois Food Bank's network in Lake County because programs that distribute food to seniors at their residences were not eligible to participate in the Client Survey. Because children and seniors are both vulnerable populations, strategies for meeting the unique needs of children and seniors should be assessed, and methods for better reaching seniors who may be facing hunger should be explored.

Although the true number of children served in Lake County is underreported in the *Hunger in America* study due to methodological reasons previously mentioned, the HIA results indicate that older children ages 6-17 are a much more represented demographic (33%) than younger children ages 0-5 (5%). As a result, efforts to strengthen child nutrition programs should focus on initiatives that target children when they are in or around school, such as the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP), as well as afterschool snack, Backpack programs, or even school-based pantry models. The fact that the vast majority of all client households with school-age children indicate participation in the NSLP, but only 17 percent participate in the SBP, points to a significant opportunity to reach children with breakfast. Furthermore, the expansion of after-school programs or summer feeding programs may help bridge a gap in time when children are unable to rely on school meals. Notably, nearly one-third of Lake County agencies expressed interest in receiving training related to summer feeding programs, suggesting that they are aware of and interested in pursuing additional opportunities to meet the needs of children. While WIC and Head Start programs remain cornerstone initiatives for younger children, efforts should continue to focus on reaching older children, one of the county's largest demographics, as one in three clients served by the food bank in Lake County is a child aged 6-17.

Hunger-relief organizations in Lake County should also consider whether existing distribution models are optimal for meeting the needs of seniors. It may be that some senior citizens are homebound or experience difficulty in traveling to local food programs due to lack of transportation

or mobility issues. An increased number of home-delivery grocery programs for seniors may be one strategy for better reaching this population. It is also possible that some seniors in Lake County are unaware of local food distributions and would benefit from increased and targeted outreach. As an example, agency staff may wish to visit recreational senior centers in the community to speak directly with senior residents of Lake County about local food distributions. There is also room for partnership with organizations focused on seniors – such as AARP and Meals on Wheels – to help older residents of Lake County struggling with hunger. Further exploration of the reasons why a small percentage of seniors are accessing local food programs is also needed to develop effective strategies.

***A disproportionately high percentage of charitable food recipients in Lake County are Latino, suggesting that Latinos may face unique barriers in their efforts to afford food and other necessities.***

More than half of clients seeking charitable food assistance in Lake County are Latino, compared to just one-fifth of the full county population. This indicates that Northern Illinois Food Bank and its partner agencies are reaching a large proportion of Latinos in Lake County, and that Latinos are a particularly vulnerable population in this region. Although a relatively high number of Latinos are accessing local food programs, the extent to which charitable food programs in this county are providing services that are culturally appropriate and address the unique needs of the Latino population is unclear. Local agencies may wish to further investigate the particular barriers to food security facing this population and the types of support and resources that would be most successful in overcoming those barriers. It may be that more Spanish-speaking staff and volunteers are needed. Additionally, it should be considered whether or not the foods currently being distributed in Lake County are culturally appropriate and likely to be consumed.

In addition, hunger-relief organizations that are not already doing so may consider translating into Spanish any information distributed, such as recipes or pamphlets about how to apply for federal nutrition programs, such as SNAP or WIC. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Latino population underutilizes SNAP benefits nationally, potentially due to lack of awareness about program eligibility, uncertainty about how to apply for benefits, language barriers, concerns about immigration status, or reasons related to stigma. Thus, more targeted SNAP outreach efforts and assistance with applications may be another way in which the charitable food network in Lake County can better support its clients, especially Latino families.

***Although many Lake County client households have some education beyond high school, few report four-year degrees.***

In Lake County, nearly half of client households report having a member with a post-high school education; however, just five percent have someone who has graduated with a four-year degree. This reveals that, despite having interest in an education beyond a high school diploma or GED, few client households have a college-educated member. Without a Bachelor's degree, client households may be experiencing limitations in their employment prospects and earning potential, which may contribute to the high percentage of client households that are not earning sufficient incomes to

meet their basic needs. More could be done to support those who are interested in taking steps to improve their economic condition through educational attainment. The government or other organizations might intervene to provide financial support to students and their families. Partial scholarships for textbooks and supplies, tuition, or other expenses would relieve some financial burden. In addition, partnerships with local schools and colleges, as well as public libraries and other organizations that interface with student-clients could provide the type of assistance students need to be successful. The dearth of Lake County educational institutions offering four-year degrees may pose challenges for potential students who do not have the financial means to attend college located further away. As such, another strategy may be to encourage local colleges in Lake County to develop additional educational programs that offer Bachelor's degrees or continuing education courses for returning or adult students to complete their degrees. An increased focus on supporting individuals who are interested in completing a four-year degree may allow for more clients to become college educated and, thus, more self-sufficient in the long run.

***The majority of Lake County client households have full-time employment, but their reported incomes are not commensurate with the local cost of living.***

Approximately nine out of ten client households in Lake County report employment, usually full-time work, in the past year, yet report annual incomes at or below \$30,000. The fact that many clients are working full-time jobs, but still struggle to secure sufficient food, indicates that clients are unable to obtain work providing them with the financial resources necessary to afford the local cost of living. Instead, clients are likely working low-wage jobs and are consequently facing barriers to being financially and food secure. Working families face unique constraints on their time and may incur additional expenses, including childcare and transportation to and from work. As a result, there should be careful consideration about how to maximize working families' incomes, as they are particularly vulnerable among the food insecure. For example, food assistance programs may consider distributing on evenings and weekends in an effort to better accommodate a working schedule. It is important to recall that no food programs in Lake County offer distributions on Sundays. Also, targeted outreach to working families for benefits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) could help provide the household with additional income. At the time of the HIA Agency Survey, only ten percent of agencies report offering EITC assistance. These efforts, in addition to support such as financial resources, childcare programs, and financial literacy and budgeting assistance, have the potential to improve the food security and financial stability of working families.

***Many individuals and their families living in Lake County are experiencing unstable living situations.***

A wealthy community with a high cost of living serves as the backdrop for client households in Lake County. Client households in Lake County are struggling to afford expenses related to housing and utilities, and are exploring temporary housing options as a result. One in six client households report temporary residences, such as living in a shelter or rented room. In addition, many survey respondents indicated recent changes in their housing, including having lived in two or more places in the past year or moving in with another person or family for financial reasons. Exploring ways to connect families with affordable housing or rental subsidies in Lake County may ameliorate some of

the financial burden they bear. Initiatives such as rental assistance or rental application assistance, assistance with credit or background checks, and helping families understand fair housing rights would put them in a better position to secure appropriate housing for their circumstances. Investment in programs that assist with utilities, such as the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) may also help families make ends meet.

***Client households in Lake County may be underutilizing SNAP benefits.***

Client households should be encouraged to take full advantage of SNAP when it is a viable option. About half of client households in Lake County report not currently receiving SNAP benefits. While income or other reasons might preclude eligibility for some client households, the majority (80%) of the client households not currently participating in SNAP appear to be income eligible. The most logical point of contact, where unenrolled clients might be connected to SNAP education, are agencies that currently operate food programs. Through the HIA Agency Survey, many agencies expressed an interest in receiving training on SNAP outreach and application assistance, although only about a half of agencies currently offer these services. The food bank offers training and encourages member agencies to take part in this instructional opportunity and is considering incentives to obtain greater participation. Additionally, the food bank and agencies could consider assisting with the SNAP recertification process as clients' benefits lapse, in order to ensure that eligible households do not lose the benefits that may be contributing to their food security. Additional investment in outreach programs and partnership with social service organizations, libraries, WIC offices, and senior residences to distribute informational materials on SNAP might also increase clients' participation and awareness about their eligibility for the program.

## **ii. Implications and Opportunities for Additional Research**

The HIA 2014 findings provide significant insight into the circumstances and challenges of individuals and their families that seek charitable food assistance in Lake County. Like other research studies, the study findings also suggest opportunities for future investigation, including further exploration related to those who are in need, but not utilizing charitable food assistance and particularly vulnerable populations.

Although HIA 2014 documents the struggles of recipients of charitable food assistance in accessing enough food, it does not provide information about those in need who are not currently connected to food programs within the Feeding America network. In addition, because clients of Northern Illinois Food Bank's network were surveyed for this study, the reasons why other community members in need may not be utilizing charitable food programs remains unknown. It may be that some of these individuals and families are unaware that local food programs exist. They may also be concerned that they do not qualify for support, or are unable to visit food programs due to transportation challenges. They may also not be utilizing charitable food assistance if they are already participating in federal programs, such as SNAP or WIC. Additionally, community members in need may be reluctant to frequent charitable food assistance programs due to stigma associated with receiving charity. An exploration of the reasons why those experiencing food insecurity are not seeking charitable food assistance would illuminate potential avenues for meeting the needs of the broader community. Thus, it may be helpful in the future to survey non-clients from the local

community about their experiences and perceptions of charitable assistance. Some methods of identifying community members in need may include visiting social service organizations that assist low-income families outside of the food assistance network, speaking with friends or neighbors of charitable food assistance recipients, as well as representatives from religious institutions who may be intimately connected with the needs of their constituency.

The results of HIA 2014 indicate that Latinos, children, and working families are a few of the most vulnerable client populations residing in Lake County, and that seniors are likely a vulnerable population that is underutilizing charitable food assistance. Continued research focused on the specific circumstances of these various populations would enable Northern Illinois Food Bank and its partner agencies to continue to tailor their services to address the unique needs of each population. As an example, further investigation regarding the circumstances of Latino clients may provide new insight into the unique barriers facing this population in Lake County, such as language or accessing culturally-appropriate foods, and how to best provide support for addressing those challenges. HIA 2014 findings highlight that Latinos comprise more than half of charitable food recipients in this county, and external data identifies that, among the Latino population, poverty rates are disproportionately high, while SNAP participation is relatively low. An assessment of additional factors specific to the Latino population accessing food programs in Lake County, such as their employment circumstances, participation rates in federal programs, and coping mechanisms related to food insecurity, would help to shape distribution models and additional services to meet their needs.

Another way in which future research can be used to provide support to Lake County residents is to understand the barriers that are limiting seniors' use of local food programs. Prior research has illustrated that the consequences of food insecurity among seniors can be particularly devastating, due to unique nutritional needs related to healthy aging.<sup>39</sup> Further research should investigate why seniors in need might not be accessing existing food programs and explore alternative models for distribution that are more mobile and responsive to the senior population, which is more likely to be homebound or face limitations in mobility. Increased knowledge about this current gap in service could help to devise effective methods for ensuring that seniors have sufficient food, regardless of their circumstances.

While these and other topics for investigation could not be addressed given the scope of this particular study, the HIA 2014 study outlines many of the challenges experienced by individuals and families in Lake County and reveals opportunities for continued research to ensure that adequate resources are provided to address their needs.

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<sup>39</sup> Feeding America and the National Foundation to End Senior Hunger, *Spotlight on Senior Health: Adverse Health Outcomes of Food Insecure Older Americans*. March 2014. Available at: <http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/our-research/spotlight-on-senior-health/or-spotlight-on-senior-health-executive-summary.pdf>

# Appendices

## Table A1 Agency and Program Characteristics

Characteristic	Count	Percentage	
		Estimate	Margin of Error (+/-)
<b>Partner Agency by Type</b>			
Faith-based or located in a religious institution	50	77.4%	8.2%
Not faith-based	15	22.6%	8.2%
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	64	100.0%	
<b>Number of Programs by Type</b>			
Meal	27	26.3%	7.4%
Grocery	53	51.5%	8.4%
Food-related benefits	2	2.0%	2.4%
Non-food	21	20.2%	6.7%
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	103	100.0%	
	<b>Median</b>	<b>Sum</b>	<b>Margin of Error (+/-)</b>
<b>Agency Staffing</b>			
Agency full-time equivalent staff at time of survey	2	191	134
	<b>Count</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>Margin Of Error (+/-)</b>
Number of agencies with no full-time equivalent staff at time of survey			
	<b>Median</b>	<b>Sum</b>	<b>Margin of Error (+/-)</b>
	38	59.7%	9.6%
<b>Program Volunteers</b>			
Number of program volunteers (weekly)	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Median</b>
	12	2,991	924
Total volunteer hours per week per program			
<i>Average percentage of program volunteers by age</i>			
18 and younger		8.6%	
19-59		55.4%	
60 and older		36.0%	
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>		<b>100%</b>	
	<b>Count</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>Percentage Margin of Error (+/-)</b>
<b>Program Challenges</b>			
Difficulty obtaining volunteers (some or a lot of difficulty)	21	29.4%	9.3%
Difficulty retaining volunteers (some or a lot of difficulty)	25	34.8%	9.6%

**Table A1 Agency and Program Characteristics**

Characteristic	Count	Percentage	
		Estimate	Margin of Error (+/-)
<i>Areas of volunteer/staff training needs</i>			
Accessing local food resources	30	38.7%	9.4%
Food safety and sanitation	36	47.3%	9.7%
Advocacy training	23	29.3%	8.8%
Client choice	16	20.0%	7.7%
Food Stamp (SNAP) application assistance and outreach	24	30.7%	8.9%
Fundraising/grant writing	33	42.7%	9.6%
Nonprofit management/board governance	16	20.0%	7.7%
Nutrition education	25	32.4%	9.1%
Social media	14	17.3%	7.3%
Summer feeding	24	30.7%	8.9%
Technology assistance	18	23.0%	8.2%
Volunteer recruitment/retention/staff succession planning	20	25.3%	8.4%
<b>Source of Program Volunteers</b>			
	<b>No Volunteers</b>	<b>Count Half of total volunteers or less</b>	<b>More than half of total volunteers</b>
Connected to agency	14	24	29
Religious groups	19	22	23
United Way	53	2	0
Other civic/nonprofit	42	14	0
Companies or business groups	41	17	0
Kindergarten through 12th grade school programs	35	22	0
Colleges/universities	37	14	2
Court-ordered community service	30	29	0
Clients	33	22	0
Volunteers connected to food bank	49	5	0
Some other source	34	18	4
<b>Average Percentage of Total Program Food Distributed</b>			
Northern Illinois Food Bank		66.3%	
Other		0.1%	
Donations		19.2%	
Purchased		14.4%	
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>		<b>100.0%</b>	

Characteristic	Count	Percentage	
		Estimate	Margin of Error (+/-)
<b>Program Access to Vehicles</b>			
Owens truck(s), van(s), or car(s) for pickups	32	51.7%	10.9%
Rents/leases truck(s), van(s), or car(s) for pickups	2	3.4%	4.0%
Depends on personal truck(s), van(s), or car(s) of staff or volunteers for pickups	37	55.4%	10.4%
Works with other programs to share the responsibility for pickups	2	3.4%	4.0%
Food and groceries are delivered to program	44	68.9%	10.0%

## Table A1 Agency and Program Characteristics

Characteristic	Count	Percentage	
		Estimate	Margin of Error (+/-)
<b>Program Reported Changes in Demand and Supply in the Past 12 Months</b>			
<i>Volume of clients compared to prior year</i>			
Saw any increase	47	62.5%	9.6%
About the same	24	31.9%	9.2%
Saw any decrease	4	5.6%	4.5%
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	75	100.0%	
<i>Food available to meet needs of clients</i>			
More food than needed	21	27.4%	8.8%
Enough food to meet needs	42	54.8%	9.8%
Less food than needed	14	17.8%	7.5%
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	76	100.0%	
<b>Programs Turning Clients Away in the Past 12 Months</b>			
Programs turning clients away for any reason	21	27.4%	8.8%
<i>Programs turning clients away frequently or occasionally due to:</i>			
Program ran out of food	3	15.0%	14.2%
Clients came more often than program rules allow	11	55.0%	19.7%
Client lived outside the program's service area	10	50.0%	19.8%
No ID	8	40.0%	19.4%
Income too high	2	10.0%	11.9%
Other	1	5.0%	8.6%
<b>Program Restrictions</b>			
<i>Any type of service restriction</i>	42	56.3%	9.9%
Daily	0	0%	0%
Weekly	7	17.5%	10.3%
Monthly	31	75.0%	11.7%
Quarterly/seasonally	0	0%	0%
Annually	3	7.5%	7.1%
<b>Agency Nutrition and Health Services</b>			
Agencies that provide any type of nutrition services	22	33.9%	9.2%
Fliers or written materials	19	29.0%	8.9%
Cooking classes or demonstrations	5	8.1%	5.3%
Nutrition workshops or classes or meetings with dietitians	9	14.5%	6.9%
Referrals	10	16.1%	7.2%
Other	3	4.8%	4.2%
Agencies that do not provide any type of nutrition services	43	66.1%	9.2%
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	64	100.0%	
<i>For those offering nutrition services how many led by:</i>			
Agency staff	9	56.3%	22.0%
Agency volunteers	14	76.5%	18.1%

**Table A1 Agency and Program Characteristics**

Characteristic	Count	Percentage	
		Estimate	Margin of Error (+/-)
Local nutritionists or other health professionals in partnership with agency	7	43.8%	22.0%
Staff from food bank	2	13.3%	15.7%
Staff from Farm Bureau or Cooperative extension	1	6.3%	10.7%
Staff from local colleges/universities	5	33.3%	21.7%
Someone else	5	33.3%	21.7%
<b>Agency Obstacles to Distribution of Healthier Foods</b>			
Client reasons (unwillingness to eat, inability to store, etc.)	29	49.1%	10.3%
Too expensive to purchase healthier foods	42	69.0%	9.4%
Inability to store/handle healthier foods	28	45.8%	10.0%
Lack of knowledge about healthier foods	4	7.1%	5.3%
Healthier food not a priority	11	19.3%	8.1%
Inability to obtain healthier foods from other donors/food sources	26	40.3%	9.6%
<b>Agency Services Related to Government Programs</b>			
Agencies that provided any SNAP-related services	33	52.5%	9.8%
Screening for eligibility	28	44.3%	9.8%
Application assistance	22	35.6%	9.6%
Education about the program	29	48.3%	10.2%
Recertification for the program	17	27.6%	9.1%
Agencies that did not provide any SNAP-related services	30	47.5%	9.8%
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	
<b>Agency Reasons for Not Offering SNAP Services, Among Agencies Reporting Not Offering Them</b>			
Staff-related issues	16	53.6%	15.7%
Not enough time	7	25.0%	13.6%
Lacking physical space or equipment	14	46.4%	15.7%
SNAP is not part of what this agency does	23	78.6%	12.9%
Other reason	3	12.5%	11.4%
<b>Agency Services Related to Other Non-SNAP Programs</b>			
Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infants and Children (WIC)	14	21.7%	8.2%
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program	18	27.9%	8.8%
Medicaid or other health care programs	19	29.0%	8.9%
Supplemental Security income (SSI)	11	18.6%	7.8%
Tax preparation or Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) assistance	6	10.3%	6.2%
Housing assistance like Section 8	15	23.3%	8.4%
<b>Agencies Providing Combinations of Other non-SNAP Program Services</b>			
One non-food service	6	9.7%	5.8%
Two non-food services	6	9.7%	5.8%
Three non-food services	3	4.8%	4.2%
Four or more non-food services	3	4.8%	4.2%



## Table A2 Client Counts

	Weekly		Monthly		Annually	
	Duplicated counts	Unduplicated counts	Duplicated counts	Unduplicated counts	Duplicated counts	Unduplicated counts
Total number of individual <b>clients</b> , all programs	16,100 (+/-4,800)	12,500 (+/-2,200)	69,900 (+/-20,900)	40,400 (+/-8,300)	838,300 (+/-251,100)	109,000 (+/-18,400)
Total number of client <b>households</b> , all programs	4,100 (+/-1,900)	3,100 (+/-800)	18,000 (+/-8,300)	10,400 (+/-3,600)	215,600 (+/-99,100)	27,200 (+/-6,800)
<i>Total number of individual clients by meal and grocery programs</i>						
Meal programs	2,500 (+/-4,200)	1,200 (+/-2,100)	11,100 (+/-18,400)	5,100 (+/-9,100)	132,800 (+/-220,900)	9,300 (+/-16,600)
Grocery programs	13,500 (+/-2,400)	11,800 (+/-1,600)	58,800 (+/-10,400)	37,400 (+/-5,000)	705,500 (+/-125,200)	104,200 (+/-14,500)
<i>Total number of individual clients by selected program subtypes (not mutually exclusive)</i>						
Pantries	13,500	11,700	58,800	36,700	705,500	102,100
Kitchens	300	0	1,100	200	13,700	400

### Table A3 Characteristics of Clients and their Households

Characteristic	Count	Percentage	
		Estimate	Margin of Error (+/-)
<b>Client Age</b>			
0-5	5,490	5.4%	4.7%
6-17	33,808	33.3%	6.8%
18-29	9,399	9.3%	5.5%
30-49	36,490	35.9%	3.3%
50-59	14,410	14.2%	6.5%
60-64	793	0.8%	0.6%
65 or older	1,168	1.2%	1.4%
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>101,558</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	
<b>Client Race/Ethnicity</b>			
White Non-Hispanic	22,385	20.7%	13.8%
Black Non-Hispanic	22,292	20.7%	24.9%
Hispanic	58,025	53.8%	37.0%
Other	5,217	4.8%	2.1%
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>107,918</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	
<b>Household Size</b>			
1 member	878	8.9%	6.3%
2 to 3 members	3,216	32.6%	19.4%
4 to 6 members	5,245	53.1%	23.6%
More than 6 members	529	5.4%	6.1%
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>9,867</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	
<b>Primary Language Spoken By Adults at Home</b>			
English	++	++	++
Spanish	++	++	++
Other	++	++	++
<b>Housing</b>			
Non-temporary housing	8,265	83.1%	16.9%
House or townhouse	++	++	++
Apartment	++	++	++
Mobile home or house trailer	++	++	++
Other	++	++	++
Temporary housing	1,678	16.9%	26.0%
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>9,943</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	
Households without access to stove, microwave or hot plate	++	++	++
Households without access to refrigeration	++	++	++

**Table A3 Characteristics of Clients and their Households**

Characteristic	Count	Percentage	
		Estimate	Margin of Error (+/-)
<i>Housing payment arrangements (non-temporary housing)</i>			
Own with mortgage			
Own free and clear	++	++	++
Rent or lease	++	++	++
Do not have to pay rent	++	++	++
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>++</b>	<b>++</b>	<b>++</b>
Respondents lived at least two places in the past 12 months	4,980	40.5%	36.6%
Respondents started living with another person or family	1,765	17.4%	8.7%
Respondents experienced foreclosure or eviction in the past five years	883	8.8%	7.9%
<b>Education</b>			
<i>Household Highest Education Level</i>			
Less than high school	1,192	11.5%	3.8%
High school diploma	3,183	30.7%	6.4%
General equivalency diploma or GED	1,190	11.5%	6.8%
Business, trade, technical license, certificate, or degree beyond high school	653	6.3%	6.7%
Some college beyond high school or a 2-year college degree	3,651	35.2%	9.3%
Four-year college degree or higher	492	4.7%	4.3%
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>10,360</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	
<i>Client Education level</i>			
Less than high school	11,488	19.2%	2.9%
High school diploma	23,966	40.0%	6.0%
General equivalency diploma or GED	8,127	13.6%	5.1%
Business, trade, technical license, certificate, or degree beyond high school	5,118	8.5%	6.9%
Some college beyond high school or a 2-year college degree	9,860	16.5%	7.4%
Four-year college degree or higher	1,373	2.3%	2.0%
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>59,932</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	
<b>Military Service</b>			
No household member has ever served	++	++	++
At least one household member has served	++	++	++
Not currently serving	++	++	++
Household member currently serving	++	++	++
Unknown if currently serving	++	++	++
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>++</b>	<b>++</b>	<b>++</b>

**Table A3 Characteristics of Clients and their Households**

Characteristic	Count	Percentage	
		Estimate	Margin of Error (+/-)
<b>Household Employment (of the person who worked the most in the past 12 months; in some households, this person may not be working)</b>			
<i>Work Status</i>			
Worked for pay in the last 4 weeks	5,698	58.9%	15.7%
Worked for pay in the last 12 months	8,536	87.1%	4.4%
Currently out of work	3,976	40.6%	15.8%
Currently out of work, but actively looking in the last 4 weeks	1,994	20.6%	6.1%
<i>Hours worked per week, among persons who worked the most in the household</i>			
1-10 hours per week	968	10.8%	10.3%
11-20 hours per week	1,038	11.6%	13.8%
21-30 hours per week	822	9.2%	5.7%
31-40 hours per week	5,390	60.1%	18.0%
Over 40 hours per week	746	8.3%	5.7%
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>8,964</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	.
<i>Time out of work, among households where previously most employed person is not working</i>			
Less than 1 month	++	++	++
1-6 months	++	++	++
7-12 months	++	++	++
More than 1 year	++	++	++
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>++</b>	<b>++</b>	<b>++</b>
<i>Out of the workforce, in the past 4 weeks, and not looking for work because</i>			
Retired	++	++	++
Disabled/poor health; caretaker for another person	++	++	++
Other	++	++	++
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>++</b>	<b>++</b>	<b>++</b>
<b>Potential Barriers and Bridges to Employment</b>			
Respondent responsible for grandchildren in household	1,550	17.2%	7.4%
Household member(s) released from prison in the past 12 months	++	++	++
<i>Adult client student status</i>			
Full-time student(s)	3,960	6.5%	6.0%
Part-time student(s)	++	++	++
<b>Health, Health Insurance, and Medical Bills</b>			
<i>Health status of respondent</i>			
Excellent	1,442	14.6%	8.4%
Very good	2,701	27.4%	9.3%
Good	3,545	36.0%	21.6%
Fair	1,456	14.8%	15.0%
Poor	710	7.2%	4.8%
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>9,853</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	

## Table A3 Characteristics of Clients and their Households

Characteristic	Count	Percentage	
		Estimate	Margin of Error (+/-)
<i>Health status of household</i>			
Household member in poor health	930	12.1%	11.6%
Household member with diabetes	2,243	22.2%	12.7%
Household member with high blood pressure	4,246	45.1%	9.4%
Household: no member has health insurance	5,277	55.1%	20.8%
Household with unpaid medical bills	5,168	51.2%	14.5%
<b>Income and Poverty</b>			
<i>Household Annual Income</i>			
\$0	1,800	20.8%	27.6%
\$1 - \$10,000	2,177	25.2%	11.1%
\$10,001 - \$20,000	2,626	30.4%	16.7%
\$20,001 - \$30,000	1,205	13.9%	8.7%
More than \$30,000	835	9.7%	9.8%
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>8,643</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	
<i>Household Annual Income as % of Poverty Level</i>			
0% (no income)	++	++	++
1% - 50%	++	++	++
51% - 75%	++	++	++
76% - 100%	++	++	++
101% - 130%	++	++	++
131% - 150%	++	++	++
151% - 185%	++	++	++
186% or higher	++	++	++
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>++</b>	<b>++</b>	<b>++</b>
<i>Household Monthly Income</i>			
\$0	2,051	20.8%	25.7%
\$1 - \$1,000	2,981	30.2%	13.3%
\$1,001 - \$2,000	3,234	32.8%	15.2%
\$2,001 - \$3,000	933	9.5%	8.3%
More than \$3,000	658	6.7%	9.3%
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>9,857</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	
<i>Households living in poverty</i>	5,605	64.9%	9.7%

## Table A4 Clients' Use of Food Assistance

Characteristic	Count	Percentage	
		Estimate	Margin of Error (+/-)
<b>Food Security</b>			
Food secure	2,677	28.6%	19.2%
Food insecure	6,669	71.4%	19.2%
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>9,346</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	
<b>Spending Tradeoffs</b>			
<i>Choose between paying for food and paying for other expenses (ever in the past 12 months)</i>			
Medicine/medical care	4,798	50.8%	14.1%
Utilities	6,386	67.0%	15.7%
Housing	4,218	49.8%	21.5%
Transportation	4,323	45.9%	18.3%
Education	1,996	23.7%	9.8%
<i>Choice of food versus medical care</i>			
Every month	2,153	22.8%	16.8%
Sometimes	2,645	28.0%	12.2%
Never	4,648	49.2%	14.1%
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>9,447</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	
<i>Choice of food versus utilities</i>			
Every month	2,528	26.5%	12.4%
Sometimes	3,857	40.5%	19.5%
Never	3,138	33.0%	15.7%
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>9,524</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	
<i>Choice of food versus housing</i>			
Every month	2,500	29.5%	14.6%
Sometimes	1,718	20.3%	9.6%
Never	4,255	50.2%	21.5%
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>8,473</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	
<i>Choice of food versus transportation</i>			
Every month	2,268	24.1%	15.8%
Sometimes	2,055	21.8%	6.2%
Never	5,094	54.1%	18.3%
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>9,417</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	
<i>Choice of food versus education</i>			
Every month	901	10.7%	7.6%
Sometimes	1,095	13.0%	8.0%
Never	6,430	76.3%	9.8%
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>8,426</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	

## Table A4 Clients Use of Food Assistance

Characteristic	Count	Percentage	
		Estimate	Margin of Error (+/-)
<b>Household SNAP Participation</b>			
Currently receiving SNAP	4,832	51.3%	15.8%
Not currently receiving SNAP	4,586	48.7%	15.8%
Never applied	++	++	++
Have applied	++	++	++
Unknown	++	++	++
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>9,418</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	
<i>Time to exhaustion of benefits for households receiving SNAP</i>			
1 week or less	++	++	++
2 weeks	++	++	++
3 weeks	++	++	++
4 weeks	++	++	++
More than 4 weeks	++	++	++
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>++</b>	<b>++</b>	<b>++</b>
<i>Potential SNAP income eligibility among client households not receiving SNAP</i>			
Not income-eligible	890	20.2%	12.8%
Potentially income-eligible	3,507	79.8%	12.8%
At 130% threshold	3,507	79.8%	12.8%
At higher broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE) threshold	++	++	++
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>4,397</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	
<i>Reasons for not applying for SNAP, among households that have never applied</i>			
Didn't think eligible	589	29.4%	16.1%
Personal reasons	++	++	++
Too difficult to apply	++	++	++
Never heard of program	++	++	++
Other	++	++	++
<b>Other Program Participation</b>			
<i>Household participation in programs targeted at school-aged children (among households with child ages 5-18)</i>			
Free or reduced-price school lunch programs	2,957	87.2%	9.3%
Free or reduced-price school breakfast programs	567	16.7%	8.5%
Afterschool snack or meal programs	++	++	++
BackPack weekend food programs	++	++	++
Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) (among all households)	2,120	24.2%	18.5%

## Table A4 Clients Use of Food Assistance

Characteristic	Count	Percentage	
		Estimate	Margin of Error (+/-)
<i>Households participating in at least one child nutrition program</i>			
One program	5,119	49.4%	11.4%
Two or more programs	2,455	23.7%	13.2%
<b>Strategies for Food Assistance</b>			
I usually wait to come to this program until I run out of food	3,421	37.9%	27.7%
I plan to get food here on a regular basis	5,598	62.1%	27.7%
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>9,018</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	
<b>Top Products Desired by Clients but Not Currently Receiving at Program</b>			
Beverages such as water or juice	2,596	27.7%	12.9%
Dairy products such as milk, cheese or yogurt	3,866	41.3%	17.3%
Fresh fruits and vegetables	4,779	51.0%	19.9%
Grains such as bread or pasta	++	++	++
Non-food items like shampoo, soap, or diapers	2,588	27.6%	12.0%
Nothing	++	++	++
Other foods or products	++	++	++
Protein food items like meats	2,534	27.0%	13.7%
This is my first time coming to this program	2,041	21.8%	29.1%
<b>Coping Strategies</b>			
<i>Types of household coping strategies used in the past 12 months</i>			
Eaten food past expiration date	3,979	49.0%	15.6%
Grew food in garden	1,865	21.7%	10.5%
Sold or pawned personal property	3,094	34.2%	18.4%
Purchased food in dented or damaged packages	3,589	40.4%	10.0%
Purchased inexpensive, unhealthy food	4,958	56.3%	13.3%
Received help from family or friends	4,573	49.0%	16.7%
Watered down food or drinks	3,943	44.7%	19.0%
<i>Number of household coping strategies used</i>			
None	2,641	28.4%	16.4%
1	538	5.8%	4.2%
2	2,009	21.6%	11.0%
3 or more	4,112	44.2%	14.9%
<b>Total excluding nonresponse</b>	<b>9,301</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	