



**ABSTRACT**

The issues of Poverty to include hunger, education, family, racial inequality, social inequality, disability and other issues all tie in with the issues of poverty. In this paper we look at food insecurity and its role in creating poverty.

How does lack of healthy food impact the ability of individuals and families to get out of poverty?

Hunger is a familiar physical sensation but can be hard to measure in a large population. Food insecurity offers an accepted method for measuring food deprivation. The US Department of Agriculture defines food insecurity as a state in which “consistent access to adequate food is limited by a lack of money and other resources at times

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during the year.” Though it is difficult to measure the amount of hunger in the United States, it is felt by many. There are millions of families, and individuals that are affected by food insecurity. Food insecurity isn't just lack of food in general, but

a lack of the proper foods to live an active, healthy life.

**In 2017, an estimated 1 in 8 Americans were food insecure, equating to 40 million Americans including more than 12 million children.**

It is important that hunger and food insecurity are closely related, by distinct, concepts. Hunger refers to a personal, physical sensation of discomfort, while food insecurity refers to a lack of available resources for food at the level of the household.

Food insecurity is a complex problem. It does not exist in isolation, as low-income families are affected by multiple, overlapping issues like affordable housing, social isolation, health problems, medical costs and low wages. Many do not have what they need to meet basic needs and these challenges increase a family's risk of food insecurity. Effective responses to food insecurity will need to address these overlapping changes.

A survey was taken at the Gospel Rescue Mission in Muskogee of the shelter guests about their own life and how food insecurity played a role. Many of them expressed how they would have to find other means to provide food for themselves, such as:

- Having sex in exchange for food,
- Dumpster diving,
- Doing drugs to curb the effects of hunger,
- Stealing,
- Skipping meals in effort to feed others in their families.

The outcomes of taking these options to obtain food all have negative potential outcomes, all of which cost our community. Some reported becoming ill due to eating outdated and unrefrigerated foods. Trips to the emergency room and follow on medical care had to be absorbed by the hospital or state funded insurance programs. Some risked breaking the law to dumpster dive or shoplift. Either option adding to their personal difficulties by adding new fines to their already weak budget. Food insecurity more than many of the other issues we have examined led to choices that cost Muskogee money and personnel.

One factor that plays a role in food insecurity is lack of transportation, or accessibility to a grocery store or local farmer markets. Grocery stores are too far away for people to walk, so they settle for unhealthy food from convenience stores and dollar stores, this is also known as “food deserts.” If you are not within walking distant of a supermarket you tend to purchase more fatty starchy foods causing health problems. Also, if you have to get a ride to go shopping only once a month, you are more likely to stock up on unhealthy processed foods rather than healthy produce.

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Low income neighborhoods lack grocery stores and farmer markets driving families to settle for unhealthy options that are closer. Neighborhoods with grocery stores prove to have healthier diets and reduced obesity. Lower income communities have a higher rate of fast food restaurants, especially near schools. They are serving energy dense and low nutrient, poor foods at low cost. High calorie low nutrient leads to weight gain and high cholesterol which typically leads to more serious and costly health issues in the future.

### Food Deprivation and Overeating

People tend to skip meals in effort to stretch their budget, in the end they end up overeating when food becomes available. Cycles of food restriction and deprivation also can lead to disordered eating behaviors, unhealthy preoccupation with food, metabolic

changes that promotes fat storage all the worse when combined with overeating.(Bove and Olson, 2006) Unfortunately, overconsumption is even easier given the availability of cheap, foods in low income community. (Drewnowski 2009)

## Feast or Famine

Low income parents particularly mothers, who sacrifice their own nutrition to feed their child (ren). This puts the mother at risk for obesity for she overeats when food becomes available triggering her to store fat.

Food insecurity is associated with less physical activity and greater perceived barriers to physical activity (e.g. too tired to be physically active)(Fra metal., 2015). In addition, many studies find that low income populations engage in less physical activity and are less physically fit than their higher income peers (Center for Disease Control and

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Prevention, 2014; Jin and Jones-Smith, 2015). This is not surprising, given that many environmental barriers to physical activity exist in low-income communities. When available, physical activity resources may not be attractive places to play or be physically active because low income neighborhoods often have fewer natural features more

visible signs of trash and despair, and more noise.

Who does food insecurity affect?

Veterans: 1 in 4 Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars are food insecure

Rural Communities: 14% of households

African Americans: 2x more likely to be food insecure than white, non-Hispanic households.

Latinos: 1 in 5 Latinos compared to 1 in 8 Americans overall.

College Students: Nearly 50% of college students struggle with food insecurity.

There is not a single age group, gender, or race that food insecurity doesn't affect.

Food banks, shelters, and soup kitchens may seem like the answer to hunger in America. They are, however, a short term and inadequate response. There has been a stunning increase in the number of food programs over the last 40 years. In 1980, there were about two dozen regional food banks in United States. Today, there are more than 200, which serve 63,000 affiliated pantries and shelters. The growth of the emergency fund, food system, however, has failed to solve hunger. Despite a spike in the great recession and a recent trend



downward as the economy has recovered, the prevalence of food insecurity has remained relatively constant over the past 20+years. A slight increase from the rate of 11.9% recorded in 1995, the year federal government started keeping statistics. How do households cope with food insecurity?

Food insecurity causes high stress conditions for single persons or households. When we don't know where our next meal is coming from it ends up becoming our central focus, it takes priority over things that are less immediately. Taking care of our responsibility for ourselves, leaving bills, car insurance, doctors visits, unpaid and put on the back burner.

People who visit food banks make hard choices to meet basic needs.

The coping strategies used include:

Receiving help from friends 53%

Watering down food or drinks 40%

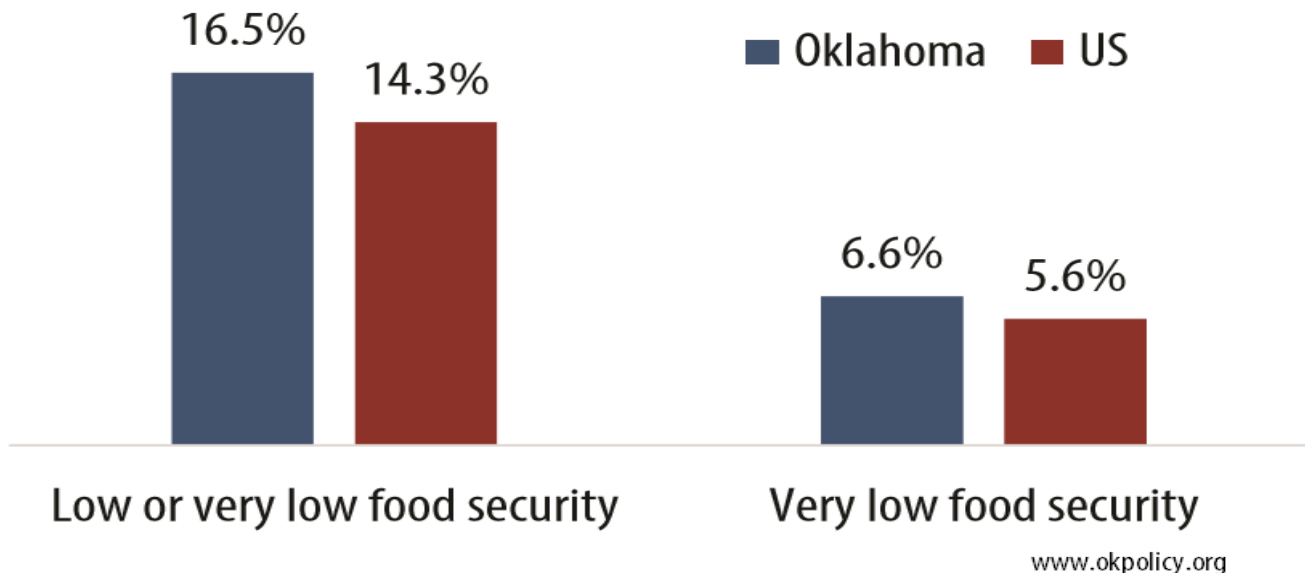
Purchasing inexpensive, unhealthy food 79%

Growing food in a Garden 23%

By making these choices it helps for short term coping skills but has a negative effect on long term health.

## **Oklahomans are more likely to be food insecure than most Americans.**

Source: 2012-2014 average, USDA



What can we do as a community to find solutions?

1. Encourage SNAP recipients to utilize farmers' markets by locating the markets in low-income neighborhoods.
2. Building and updating low income neighborhoods park and recreation areas.
3. Working as a community to clean up and beautify the city.
4. Food banks and other non-profits should require cooking and nutrition classes as a part of receiving benefits.
5. "Soup kitchens" should create a cooking class and require community members accessing the kitchen to attend. (Class should utilize "My Plate" guidelines.)
6. Increase the number of Community Gardens in more low-income areas teaching classes on planting.
7. Gardening classes focused on indoor and small yard gardening by season.
8. Banks could offer classes on budgeting.

9. Local gyms can offer discounts to low income men and women participating in poverty reduction efforts.

10. Educating about fitness trails and parks exercise equipment.

11. We can gather all of Muskogee's resources together for food insecurity awareness fairs.

## **GRM BHAG**

# **Big Holy Audacious Goal**

The “hand out” model for food distribution while able to sustain individuals and families completely fails to really help people. Gospel Rescue Mission has been responsible for enabling people to continue in their current lifestyles and choices that prevent them from rising up in our community. We are proposing to change this with the following standards.

- Change from a food bank to a food coop
- Coop membership requirements
  - Attend 4 gardening classes a year
  - Volunteer 4 hours a week in the GRM community garden
  - Complete the online GRITU course on GRM food service
  - Attend 4 nutrition and cooking classes a year
  - Participate in 1 community cleanup project a year
- Coop members will receive gardening supplies to include seeds
- The Coop will establish a store to sell any excess vegetables.

***“Pay attention to the hungry, both in this country and around the world. Pay attention to the poor. Pay attention to our responsibilities for world peace. We are our brother's keeper.”(George McGovern.)***

**2 Corinthians 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.**

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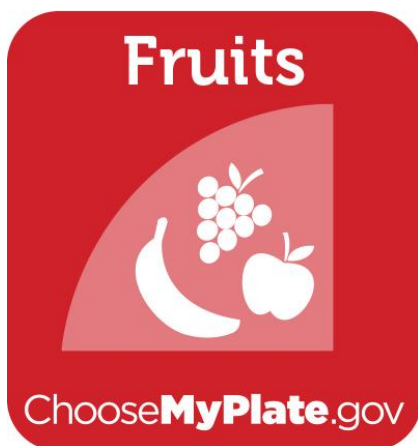


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11. ChooseMyPlate.gov

## Hello, OKLAHOMA!

MyPlate, MyState connects Americans with the foods and flavors grown in their states and regions. Use the information below to find out how the foods grown and raised by Oklahoma producers can help create a healthy eating style and support local farmers and communities!

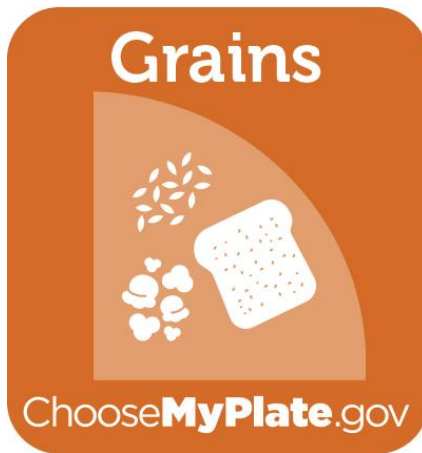
### Oklahoma's Locally Grown and Produced Foods



Apples, Apricots, Blackberries, Blueberries (tame and wild), Cantaloupes and Muskmelons, Cherries (sweet and tart), Figs, Grapes, Kiwifruit, Nectarines, Peaches, Pears, Persimmons, Plums and Prunes, Raspberries, Strawberries, Watermelons



**Asparagus, Beans (snap), Beets, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage (head), Carrots, Cauliflower, Collards, Cucumbers and Pickles, Eggplant, Garlic, Kale, Lettuce (head and leaf), Mushrooms, Mustard Greens, Okra, Onions (dry and green), Peas (green), Peppers, Potatoes, Pumpkins, Radishes, Spinach, Squash (summer and winter), Sweet Corn, Sweet Potatoes, Tomatoes (in the open), Turnip Greens, Turnips**



**Barley, Corn for grain (e.g., flour),  
Oats, Rye, Wheat**



**Beans (other than lima beans), Beef, Bison, Carp, Catfish, Chicken, Cowpeas, Duck, Eggs, Elk, Emu, Goat, Goose, Lamb, Ostrich, Partridge, Peanuts, Peas, Pecans, Pheasant, Pigeon or Squab, Pork,**

Quail, Rabbit, Sesame Seeds, Soybeans, Sunflower Seeds, Tilapia, Turkey, Venison, Walnuts



Milk, Milk from sheep and goats

*Note: Beans and Peas in the Protein Foods list are in dried form and are used as meat alternatives. Additionally, foods that do not belong to any food group are not listed.*

Did You Know?

- Oklahoma is a major producer of beef and wheat.
- Up to 21% of schools in Oklahoma are using local and regional foods to serve healthy, MyPlate-inspired meals to kids. That's over \$4.3 million invested in the local economy!

Show Us Your Plate!

- What does *your* Oklahoma plate look like? Show how you use foods from your state and region by taking a picture of your plate and sharing on social media using the hashtag [#MyPlateMyState](#). Check out the [USDA Blog post](#) for more information on how to share your plate!

Tips and Resources

- [MyPlate, MyState Graphics](#) – State icons, blank MyPlate to fill in with your own foods, MyPlate Local Foods Menu
- [Farm to School Census](#) – State and school district information about the use of local foods in school breakfasts and lunches, and summer and preschool meals

- [Toolkit for Teachers](#)
- [National Farmers Market Directory](#)
- [CSA \(Community Supported Agriculture\) Directory](#)