

# Food Security, Nutrition, and Access: An Analysis of Need in Orange County

Executive Summary  
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Prepared by



On behalf of



Launched in 2019, the Orange County Hunger Alliance is currently a collaborative of Orange County's largest food banks and food redistribution stakeholders: Abound Food Care, Second Harvest Food Bank, and Community Action Partnership of Orange County (OC Food Bank), working to address hunger in Orange County. In support of this collective mission, Equity in OC has provided funding to the OC Hunger Alliance to evaluate the current landscape of food security, nutrition, and access within Orange County.

In collaboration with the nonprofit Charitable Ventures, this needs assessment was implemented to assess the current state of the region's response to food insecurity and to help OC Hunger Alliance identify ways to collectively drive longer-term solutions that address root causes of poverty and hunger. The assessment employed various data collection methods, including literature review, analysis of publicly available data, surveys, and focus groups with providers and consumers.

# High-Level Report Findings

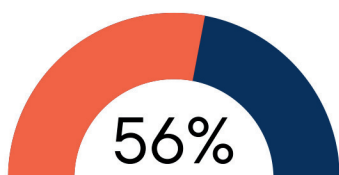
## Demographics

There is no single “kind” of person who seeks food security.

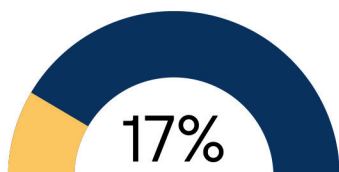


## Utilization

More than half of consumers struggle to access benefits and services.



Over half of consumers **(56%)** indicated that they have challenges accessing food benefits or services either “always” or “sometimes”.



Almost one-fifth of consumers **(17%)** are “never” able to access culturally appropriate food through food benefits or services, while 45% are sometimes able to access.

## Capacity

Less than half of food distribution providers allow for food choice.

Seventy percent (70%) of providers distribute food directly, with almost half having a food choice model (45%).

## Referrals

Providers who do not provide direct food support still need to address hunger.

Thirty percent (30%) of the providers who responded to the survey do not distribute food directly, but rather refer out to other food providers, with local food pantries being the top referral source.

## Unmet Needs

**Affordable food, affordable housing, and employment are critical to food security.**

Providers emphasized the need for culturally appropriate food and logistical support.



**Housing**



**Income Assistance**



**Job Training**



**Counseling Services**

## Barriers

**Both providers and consumers face challenges in accessing and distributing nutritious food.**

Lack of protein in their pantry supply, lack of client transportation to/from pantry, difficulty storing food, insufficient supply of food, and lack of nutritious food options were some of the challenges providers face.

Stigma, immigration status concerns, and transportation were major obstacles for consumers.

While all immigrants can access food banks and pantries, access to benefits for immigrants is more difficult; undocumented immigrants do not qualify for CalFresh, and immigrants seeking citizenship tend to not use benefits to avoid the perception of being a "public charge".

## Addressing Needs

**Improvements in funding, storage, transportation, and distribution will be critical to addressing the barriers.**

Providers suggested flexible funding, improved food storage resources, and enhanced transportation for consumers as ways to address barriers to food access.

Consumers expressed a desire for closer food pantries, home delivery options, fresher and more nutritious food, and more varied food choices.



# Recommendations



## PROMOTE FOOD CHOICE

- Increase access to culturally appropriate foods and allow consumers to select their foods to reduce waste and meet health and cultural needs.



## CHAMPION FOOD BENEFIT AWARENESS AND ACCESS

- Simplify public benefit program applications and increase advocacy and education around these programs.
- Improve access for non-English speakers by providing translators and materials in multiple languages.



## STRENGTHEN SYSTEMS OF CARE

- Strengthen the OCHA Steering Committee.
- Build a broader collaborative group to address hunger, equity, and access.
- Develop a strategic plan for implementing the OC Food Security Needs Assessment recommendations.
- Enhance collaboration between providers to improve efficiency and reduce food waste.

# Vision for Collective Action

This assessment provides a comprehensive and current view of food insecurity in Orange County, highlighting gaps and opportunities for improvement and investment. The vision of the OC Hunger Alliance is to expand the coalition of stakeholders addressing food insecurity as a social determinant of health, and to work together to create an equitable and comprehensive food security system in Orange County.



For the full report, visit [ochungeralliance.org/report](https://ochungeralliance.org/report)