



MEMBER OF
FEEDING[®]
AMERICA

Health and Hunger

How the Two Exist Hand-in-Hand

Health and hunger are deeply intertwined. Sustained food insecurity has a measurable impact on an individual's overall health and quality of life. Feeding America estimates that 58% of the households served by food banks like Feeding the Gulf Coast include someone living with high blood pressure. Food insecurity is also linked to a higher prevalence of chronic health conditions, including diabetes, hypertension, and arthritis. These chronic disease factors lead to increased healthcare costs for those who are already juggling strained budgets. For people facing food insecurity, the challenge of adequate diet and nutrition, doctor visits, and medication is often unmanageable, creating a cycle of tough choices that results in otherwise manageable diseases becoming a health crisis.

Feeding the Gulf Coast recognizes the parallel union proper nutrition has in combating the impact of food insecurity on health. We believe no one should have to sacrifice the food

they need for a better life. As part of our work to address this, Feeding the Gulf Coast is working to implement Healthy Eating Research* (HER) nutritional guidelines within our inventory system to provide nutritional resources to our agencies and those we serve. This system looks at food sources through a three-tiered lens. Our goal is to make a concentrated effort to source healthier options so that those we serve will have access to more nutritious foods.

Additionally, the food bank is working to strengthen healthcare partnerships. One example of this is the collaboration with Victory Health Partners, a local nonprofit focused on providing affordable medical services. Through this partnership, patients identified as food insecure are provided prescription meal boxes. By working with healthcare partners in our area in this way, individuals facing chronic diseases can be screened for food insecurity and provided resources for obtaining healthy food to help address health issues.



*HEALTHY EATING RESEARCH (HER)

This system is never meant to place blame or guilt on food choices, but rather to help educate which foods lead to better nutrition. The guidelines focus primarily on these three nutrients to limit; saturated fat, sodium, and added sugar, based on evidence linking increased consumption to increased risk for diet-related chronic diseases.²



CHOOSE OFTEN

Sat. Fat	Sodium	Added Sugars
≤ 2g	≤ 230mg	0g



CHOOSE SOMETIMES

Sat. Fat	Sodium	Added Sugars
0g	1-140mg	1-11g



CHOOSE RARELY

Sat. Fat	Sodium	Added Sugars
≥ 2.5g	≥ 480mg	≥ 12g

*Images from the Feeding America network.
https://healthyeatingresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Nutrition-Guideline-Expert-Panel_one-pager2.pdf



GET INVOLVED

Visit our website
feedingthegulfcoast.org



FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

At Feeding the Gulf Coast, one of the most important but lesser-recognized parts of our work is advocating for our communities as it relates to hunger. The impact of food insecurity is experienced by children, seniors, individuals, and families alike. We know this very real problem is often difficult to see, so we take this responsibility seriously. Every day we work to get the word out and advocate for those in need. Through our amazing, dedicated network of partners, we can further understand the needs of those affected by hunger and what is working or missing to better help them.

We work with local, state, and federal officials to champion on behalf of the communities we serve. We recently met with the offices of multiple senators to discuss the importance of continued support. We urged for the extension of vital waivers that have allowed us to reach more children and seniors in ways not previously possible. These advocacy efforts make a difference and in only the past six months have resulted in an increase of 1,500 additional specialty food boxes per month to reach more senior citizens, connecting thousands of individuals with benefits and resource information, and securing legislative appropriations to increase access to fresh produce across our service area. Additionally, Feeding the Gulf Coast was granted 'Hall of Fame' status by Feeding America for the 4th year in a row, and we were included in The Food Bank News "Advocacy Honor Roll."

Of course, all of us along the Gulf Coast can play an essential role in advocating and supporting our mission. Thank you for joining your voice with us to ensure more children and families in our community have a meal on their table.

Michael Ledger

MICHAEL LEDGER
PRESIDENT & CEO, FEEDING THE GULF COAST



Kids Need Meals Help Ensure They Have Access

Bennett Russell Elementary School students were asked what they would buy if given \$100. You can imagine the list. There were mentions of kittens and an Xbox. One kid had his priorities in order: charity first, then a visit to the zoo, and finally Chick-fil-a. Yet, an overwhelming thread wove most of them together—others. The items they purchased would go to a family member or other kids in need. This act of kindness is not reserved for hypothetical wish lists. It extends into the tangible reality that not every child has the food they need to thrive. **"I am so happy, I get a bag Friday, is it Friday? My sissy gets one too. I share with my baby brother,"** a second-grade recipient of the backpack program mentioned to her teacher.

Hunger impacts more than 100,000 children across our service area. Last year, Feeding the Gulf Coast's child nutrition programs ensured more than 14,000 children had access to nutritious meals throughout the year. However, as families continue to face the challenges of rising inflation, higher gas prices, and ongoing uncertainties—Feeding the Gulf Coast

is working to strengthen its programs and reach more children in need. Rural counties often consist of food deserts where nutritious food sources are sparse or located farther away. As a result, many working families are stretched to make ends meet and cannot afford to travel to nearby towns for healthier and fresher food options, forcing them to rely on expensive, convenience-type meals.

Feeding the Gulf Coast is seizing the opportunity to provide critical child nutrition programs to more than 50 schools currently untapped in our rural service area. By expanding our school pantry and backpack programming within our rural counties, we hope to bridge the gap between lack of access to consistent meals and provide kids with a way to connect their families to needed items through school pantries. This is a big lift but we are committed to reaching every child within our service area who is facing hunger. We are prioritizing funding and partnership opportunities to ensure no child goes to bed hungry. To learn how you can help us reach this goal, please contact Cyndy Baggett at cbaggett@feedingthegulfcoast.org or by calling (251) 653-1617 ext. 130.



40TH ANNIVERSARY VIDEO
Visit feedingthegulfcoast.org to watch our special celebratory video.

Kids are counting on us. They are also counting on you.

At the onset of the pandemic, our child nutrition site partners were able to utilize provisions made possible through the nationwide issuance of child nutrition waivers by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The implementation of these flexible policies ensured our child nutrition partners could eliminate barriers for children accessing nutritious meals while maintaining the safety of each site's staff and volunteers. Through this, our programs have been able to more effectively distribute meals to children and ensure more kids can participate in a way that best meets their needs.

Unfortunately, without the intervention of Congress, those waivers are set to expire on June 30, 2022, which will reverse systems put in place that have helped remove barriers to children accessing critical, nutritious meals. We ask you to join us in asking your elected officials to take action to extend these waivers now, so meals for children are not left on the table.

Visit feedingthegulfcoast.org/get-involved/hunger-advocacy or use your phone to scan the QR code below to speak with your representative and ensure children have access to meals throughout the summer.



WHAT A YEAR

Last year we continued to focus on improving lives as families, seniors, and individuals in need rebounded from the challenges of 2020. Yet, in many ways, those same challenges lingered. The disruptions of supply chain issues and waves of variants continued to make life hard for families. With food insecurity rates across the central Gulf Coast higher than the national average, this is especially true for those in our area facing hunger.

In 2021, the food bank distributed more than 27.5 million meals through our network of community partners and outreach programs. This concentrated effort could not be made possible without your generosity and support.

We completed an expansion project at our Florida Facility to increase our usable warehouse space to 20,530 square feet, creating an addition of 68% of food storage capacity. Also, we celebrated 40 years of service to our communities.

As we embark on the next decade of growth, we invite you to join along and help make a difference in your community. Whether through volunteering, donating, or partnering with our mission, you will continue to support the food bank to ensure more families in need have access to the meals around their table.

Thank You,

YOUR SUPPORT LAST YEAR HELPED US



PROVIDE RELIEF
as families navigated the ongoing pandemic



ENSURE 14,000+
children had access to meals this year through multiple child nutrition programs



CONDUCT 670+
contactless food distributions through partner agencies



DELIVER 843,406
pounds of emergency food and supplies in the aftermath of natural disasters



SUPPLY 27.5+
million meals to families in need in our area

