




Food Insecurity in Culpeper, Fauquier, Madison, and Rappahannock Counties

The problem, how we are helping, and how we can do more.

Presented by Northern Piedmont Community Foundation



What is food insecurity?



“The condition of not having access to sufficient food, or food of an adequate quality, to meet one's basic needs.”

Marginal Food Security/Food Insecure: Concern that food will run out before being able to afford more.

Low Food Security: Reduced quality, variety, or desirability of food intake.

Very Low Food Security: Disrupted eating patterns resulting in reduced food intake.

*Note: Anyone who doesn't get enough to eat on a regular basis can be classified as “food insecure,” whether or not they are accessing assistance programs; if someone is using food assistance programs and feels they are getting enough to eat **because** of the program, they may not be classified as “food insecure.”*

Source: Michigan State University, <https://foodbank.msu.edu/snap/what-is-food-insecurity.html>



What does it *really* mean to have low food security?

Marginal and low food security don't look as dramatic as starvation. People do not die as a direct result of marginal or low food security – rather, they experience a persistently lowered quality of life, often in ways that create/reinforce/exacerbate other quality of life issues.

Food insecurity means...

- Being forced to make do with less or lower-quality food in order to afford rent and utility bills
- Skipping meals or eating smaller meals, meaning the majority of the day – often work and school hours – is spent in a constant state of low-grade hunger
- Having to choose cheap food that fills you up in the short term, but leaves you hungry soon after eating
- Choosing to eat less (or nothing at all) so that other people in your household can eat enough
- Thinking about food all the time, and/or feeling constant anxiety over not knowing where your next meal will come from



What does food insecurity feel like?

Think about how you feel when you're hungry, especially if you've been hungry for awhile. Your stomach may hurt, you may feel lightheaded or tired. You may get short-tempered or find yourself overwhelmed by small things.


Now imagine feeling that way all the time, but still having to go about your day as usual.

Food insecurity can be a vicious cycle.

Being undernourished, even if you're not necessarily hungry, can impact your **ability to focus** on important tasks, including tasks you need to complete in order to earn money for food, or to do well in school.

Nutrition affects **mood and cognitive ability**, making it harder to deal with stresses and inconveniences – including stress around work, money, and food.

Being undernourished can make it **difficult to make decisions** – including decisions about food and budgets.



Who experiences food insecurity in our region, and why?

As of 2022, at any given moment, between 20 and 34 million people – more than 10% of our national population – are experiencing marginal to severe food insecurity.

Food insecurity rates are higher in rural areas than urban; living in a rural community comes with unique challenges that make affording food more difficult, including lack of transportation, lack of accessible grocery stores, jobs that pay low wages, and underemployment.

The good news: in the counties we serve, the rate of food insecurity is lower than in the nation at large; they are also lower than the statewide rate of 8.1%.

Culpeper: 3,420 people / 6.6% of total population


Fauquier: 4,220 people / 5.8% of total population

Madison: 960 people / 7% of total population

Rappahannock: 540 people / 7.3% of total population

Total: 9,140 individuals

Source: Feeding America. Figures are from 2021.



Who experiences food insecurity in our region, and why?

Food insecurity increasingly affects individuals who are employed and housed. Households with children are more likely to be food insecure than households with adults only.

In 2022, **30.8% of adults nationwide who were not working** reported being food insecure, but **17.3% of employed adults** also reported food insecurity.

Households with children are more likely to be food insecure than adult-only households. In 2022, **1 in 4 adults with kids** nationwide reported some level of food insecurity, compared to **1 in 5 adults who do not have children in the house**.*

Food insecurity is starkly racialized in Virginia and the nation at large; **17% of Black Virginia residents** and **12% of Hispanic residents** were food insecure in 2021, compared to about **5% of White residents**.**

*Source: Health Reform Monitoring Survey, June 2022

**Source: Feeding America's "Map the Gap" report, 2021

Contrary to what you might expect, the pandemic did not increase food insecurity – in fact, food insecurity rates were **lower** in 2020 and 2021 than prior years.

However, this change is attributable **almost entirely to pandemic-era measures** like the Emergency Child Tax Credit and the expansion of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. This is confirmed by the fact that, as these programs expire, the trends are reversing: in April 2021, less than 1 in 6 adults (15.3%) reported food insecurity; by June 2022, the number was already back to pre-pandemic levels of nearly **1 in 4 (21.4%)***. **“Very low”** food insecurity rates **nearly doubled** in that time.

As inflation gets worse and more programs expire, while wages and unemployment remain flat, it is all but guaranteed that more people, especially vulnerable populations like children, people with disabilities, and elderly people, in our region will experience food insecurity.



Glossary note:

Terms like “food bank” and “soup kitchen” are often used interchangeably, but there are actually several specific, distinct types of places where people can go for direct food assistance. Here are the most important ones to know.

Food bank: Facilities that store food to be delivered to local food programs, such as food pantries.

Food pantry: Distribution center where the public can go to receive food directly. Typically this consists of ingredients, including fresh produce, although some pantries provide prepared meals. Some pantries have eligibility requirements (proof of low income, proof of residency) that individuals must prove they fit, while others serve anyone who asks.

Food closet: Typically smaller than a food pantry, operating out of an existing institution that provides other services, such as churches or schools. Often restricted to non-perishable items. Eligibility restrictions are less common with food closets, but some do have them.

Mobile food pantry: A food pantry on wheels. Some deliver directly to people’s homes, while others set up at multiple central locations. Typically seen in rural areas where populations are widely dispersed. Again, eligibility requirements are less common here, but some mobile pantries have them.

“Soup kitchen:” This term is less frequently used, but typically refers to a place where people can receive a single prepared meal, such as soup and a side of bread. Rarely require proof of eligibility to receive meals.

Meal program: Programs that provide free prepared meals to specific groups of eligible individuals, such as lunches for children. Often run by state or federal government, or in partnership between govt and local nonprofits. Most meal programs have eligibility requirements that users must prove they fit, such as proof of income.

Who is helping?



What programs are available for individuals in the counties we serve who are experiencing food insecurity?

Families in Culpeper, Fauquier, Madison, and Rappahannock counties can get help – either *directly from or by accessing programs funded/supported by* – a patchwork of national, regional, state-wide, and local initiatives.

Federal:

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

National School Lunch Program (NSLP)

Free and Reduced-Price Meals (FARM)

Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP)

State:

CommonHelp

Food pantries and food closets

Food assistance in Culpeper, Fauquier, Madison, and Rappahannock counties

Distributors

Clara's House Food Pantry (Community Touch)

Fauquier Community Food Bank

Fauquier FISH

Fauquier Education Farm

Boys and Girls Club

Fauquier FRESH

Peas and Grace Food Pantry

Grace Episcopal (the Plains)

Etlan Community Church

Rappahannock Food Pantry

Wayland Blue Ridge Association

Madison Emergency Services Association (MESA)

1st Call for Help

Empowering Culpeper

Manna Ministry

Reva Mobile Pantry (Blue Ridge Food Bank)

Sam's Place

St. Stephens Food Closet

Culpeper Hope Community Church of Nazarene

Salvation Army

Culpeper Human Services

Culpeper Senior Center

Shiloh Baptist Church

Culpeper United Methodist Church

St Joseph's Table Ministry

Share Food Program (Catholic Charities)

Rappahannock Rapidan Community Services

Donors

Fauquier Education Farm

4P Foods

Harvest of Hope Farm

F.T. Valley Farm

Waterpenny Farm

Loaves and Fishes (Madison County)

Loaves and Fishes (Rappahannock)

Food consortiums/coalitions

These groups are made up of many smaller groups who band together to coordinate the efforts of food donors and food distributors. Many consortiums and coalitions, but not all, include private companies such as grocery stores and restaurants.

Fauquier Food Coalition

Fauquier County Dept. of Social Services
Grace Episcopal - the Plains
Long and Foster - Warrenton
Mt Nebo Baptist Church - Marshall
Our Saviour Lutheran Church - Warrenton
St James Episcopal Church - Warrenton
St John the Evangelist Catholic Church - Warrenton
Warrenton Baptist Church - Warrenton
Warrenton United Methodist Church - Warrenton
Monterey Church - Warrenton
Wakefield School
Highland School
Giant Food
Safeway Food
Warrenton Rotary Club
Fauquier HS
Kettle Run HS
Liberty HS

Fauquier Food Rescue

4P Foods
FT Valley Farm at Mont Medi
Fauquier Education Farm
Harvest of Hope Farm
Waterpenny Farm
Boys and Girls Club of Fauquier
Fauquier FRESH
Fauquier FISH
Fauquier Food Bank
Peas and Grace Food Pantry

Wayland Blue Ridge Baptist Association (also includes churches in Orange and Greene counties)

Antioch Baptist	Mt. Holy
Bethel Baptist	Mt Olive Baptist
Beulah Baptist	Mt Pisgah
Cedar Grove Baptist	Mt Zion Baptist
Chestnut Grove	Nazareth Baptist
Children of Light	Oak Grove
Elk Run	Orange Grove Baptist
Free Baptist	Pilgrim Baptist
Free Union Baptist	Pilgrim Baptist
Good Hope Baptist	Promise Land
Greater Faith	Rising Zion
Hopewell	Shiloh Baptist
Locust Grove	Waterloo Baptist
Mt Calvary	

What do our grantees and partners say about food insecurity? What trends do they observe? What challenges do they face?

Insights from Fauquier Community Food Bank & Thrift Store, Fauquier FISH, and Rappahannock Food Pantry

We conducted in-depth interviews with three partners to get further insight into the trends they see, the challenges they face, and what they wish more people knew about nutrition and hunger in our community.



Fauquier Community Food Bank & Thrift Store



Fauquier FISH



Rappahannock Food Pantry



Logistics

Sources of Food:

figures are averages for typical pantries in region

Retail Grocer Donations: 37%

USDA Contributions: 24%

Donations from Farmers and Produce Traders: 15%

Purchased Food: 10%

Manufacturer Donations: 8%

Miscellaneous: (e.g. trading with other food banks): 4%

Food Drives: 2%

All three partners, along with many other distributors in the region, had the following in common:

- Work extensively in coalitions and collaborations – all are constantly looking for more partnership opportunities
- Run additional programs, often by partnering with other nonprofits and government agencies, to meet needs outside of food (personal hygiene products, backpacks for kids, cooking and gardening supplies and tools)
- Rely heavily on volunteer labor
- Partner with others to provide fresh produce to supplement non-perishable goods
- Rely on Dept of Social Services to refer clients; also find clients thru churches, schools, and other community institutions

There are differences between programs as well:

- 2 partners (Rappahannock Food Pantry and Fauquier Community Food Bank) require some kind of proof of income and/or residency to access services; Fauquier FISH provides food “no questions asked.” Often, accepting aid from/partnering with government agencies requires a pantry to implement eligibility requirements and collect/track proof of eligibility



Key Takeaways

- The number one cause of food insecurity is low income
- Food insecurity is rarely, if ever, the only challenge faced by individuals and families
- All partners benefit from working in coalition; lots of collaboration in the space, always seeking more opportunities
- Major challenge for providers: funding
 - Many funders and donors prefer not to fund “overhead,” but this is **inherently a high-overhead business** (refrigeration and adequate storage space are both critical and increasingly expensive)
 - All partners **rely heavily on volunteers**, but managing volunteers is a full-time job in and of itself
 - **Rising food prices** increase the need for services, while simultaneously making it **more expensive** to provide them



Key Takeaways

- Getting food into people's hands is a challenge, both in terms of needing **more hours of operation** and needing **more resources to deliver food** to people without reliable transportation
- Price hikes, rising rents, expiring pandemic-era programs, and trends such as an increase in denial of SNAP benefits are **deeply concerning to all partners**
- Distributing food, especially when in-person delivery is possible, allows partners to interact with the community and often leads to **uncovering other issues** (for example, observing that someone's power has been cut off, or that someone needs medical care, while delivering food)



Challenge: Accessibility

At right is a small sample of food distributors in our region with their hours of operation noted.

Imagine a single parent who works irregular hours at a retail job, or a person with a disability who has access to a health aide for a couple hours per week. How easy would it be for those people to access one of these food pantries?

Imagine you work for one of these food pantries – your resources are thin and you have hundreds of volunteers and their schedules to wrangle. How easy would it be to figure out which days and times need more coverage?

FOOD	Times
Clara's House Food Pantry	Saturday 10:00 - 12:00
Fauquier Community Food Bank	M-F noon to 4:00
Fauquier FISH	Tues 9:30 to noon, Th 6:00 to 7:30 Sat 9:30 to noon
Grace Episcopal (the Plains)	M-F 1 to 4 and 2nd Sat every month 9 to 11
Rappahannock Food Pantry	Tues/Thurs 12:00 - 4:00 Sat - 10:00 am - 2:00 pm
1st Call for Help	4th Wednesday of the month
Empowering Culpeper	3rd Sat of the month - 9-11:00
Manna Ministry	Wed & Friday 11-12:30
Reva Mobile Pantry (Blue Ridge Food Bank)	4th Wednesday of the month, 10:00 - 11:30
Sam's Place	Food Voucher Monday through Friday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm
St Stephens Food Closet	M-Fri 9:00 - 12:00 , Thurs - 4:00 pm-6:00 pm,
Culpeper Hope Community Church of Nazarene	Tues & Fri 12:00 - 2:00
Culpeper Human Services	Monday through Friday 8:00 am -4:30 pm
Culpeper Senior Center	M, T, W, F lunch to seniors (max capacity 60)
Shiloh Baptist Church	2nd Saturday of the month 9:00 - 11:00
St Joseph's Table Ministry	Wednesday 4:00 - 6:00



Opportunity: Deep Impact

When we support programs to mitigate food insecurity, we support much more than just nutrition.

When a person's nutritional needs are met, a world of opportunity opens up:

- Not having to worry about a grocery bill frees up money for rent and utilities, preventing crises like evictions and utility shut-offs
- Children who are well-nourished do better in school and navigate conflict more successfully, giving them a better shot at higher incomes and healthier relationships with themselves and others in the future
- Being well-nourished and well-fed helps adults navigate stress and conflict more successfully, which in turn can help avoid escalating conflict at work or at home. For parents, this can have an impact over generations to come.

Food pantry staff and volunteers see hundreds of members of their community every month, creating opportunities to provide support that a person might not know is available.

- Many food pantries offer programs like cooking classes, or have staff/volunteers on hand that can help folks apply for programs like utility bill assistance or English language classes
- Many food pantries offer delivery services; this gives staff/volunteers a chance to see the living conditions of the folks they serve, and intervene in emerging problems before they get more serious.

**How can we do more – as a
foundation and as individuals –
to support this work in our
region?**

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