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Where Low-Income San Diegans Get Food Assistance

San Diego Hunger Coalition releases hunger relief landscape

Latest research from SD Hunger Coalition reveals 60% of hunger relief in San Diego comes from CalFresh.

In total, 91% provided by federal government; only 9% from private donations.

San Diego, May 6, 2019 – San Diego Hunger Coalition has released a report detailing sources of meals for hunger relief. The report summarizes a landscape assessment that gives a **snapshot of the collective efforts of all food assistance providers in San Diego County**. It is part of a larger, collaborative effort to create evidence-based programming, supported by research, that will reduce hunger by increasing access and removing barriers to food assistance.

The research for this brief was conducted by San Diego Hunger Coalition with data, input, and guidance from the Hunger Free San Diego Advisory Board, a collective of agencies representing all aspects of hunger relief in San Diego County.

Key findings include:

- For every 10 meals provided by food assistance in San Diego County, 9 meal are provided through federally funded programs.
- SNAP (known in California as CalFresh) provides 60% of all food assistance for people in need in San Diego County.
- Low-income households in San Diego County must access multiple food assistance resources to meet their monthly needs.

“Most food-insecure San Diego households must piece together various types of food assistance every month to meet basic needs, like a jigsaw puzzle,” says Anahid Brakke, Executive Director of San Diego Hunger Coalition. “To feed the most people with our current resources, we need to maximize our use of federal nutrition programs and fill in the gaps with distributions from food banks and pantries, not the other way around.”

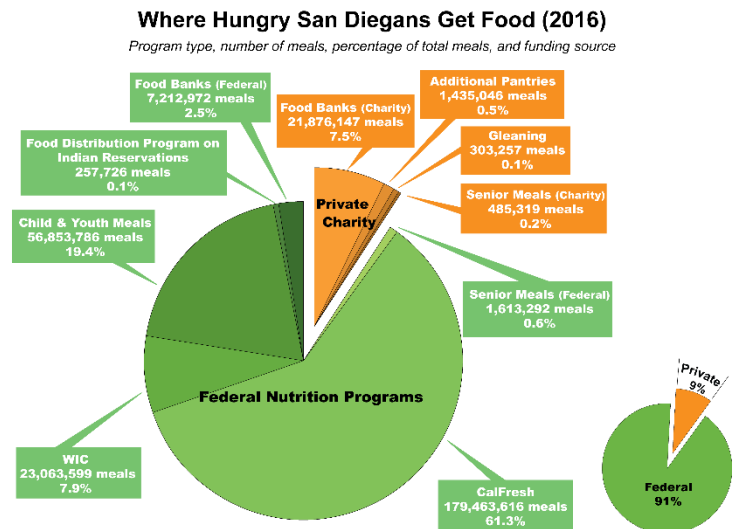
While private charity is essential for addressing emergency situations it does **not have the capacity nor the means to make up for a loss in federal programming** such as those currently proposed by the USDA and the President’s 2020 budget.

Report based on 2016 aggregate data.

Implications and sample scenarios on the reverse.

Full issue brief available at

www.sdhunger.org/sdhc-research-reports



San Diego Hunger Coalition's research has several implications:

1. **Cuts to federal nutrition like SNAP and free and reduced price school meals would have devastating impacts on San Diego's population**, because food banks and pantries are not in a position to replace that loss in addition to what they already distribute.

Example: To make up for a 20% cut to SNAP (CalFresh), as proposed in 2018 at the federal level, our food banks and pantries would have to provide an additional estimated 28.8 million meals or double the number of pounds they currently distribute.

2. **Privately-funded food assistance is a precious and responsive resource that can fill the gaps left by federal food assistance.** To maximize the impact of their resources and to stretch our charitable dollars the furthest, funders and nonprofits should focus private charitable dollars on paying for food that cannot be provided by federal nutrition programs.

Example: Organizations that purchase snacks for kids in afterschool programs with private donations could instead serve fully reimbursed afterschool meals through the federal Child & Adult Care Food Program thereby freeing up private donations for other needs such as programs that help prevent hunger over the weekend.

3. **Individual donors and private foundations are encouraged to advocate for and invest in solutions that make federal nutrition programs work better for the people they serve.** Investments like this can unlock permanent sustainable funding streams for local food assistance.

Example: A one-year grant of \$50,000 to support the salary of a person that helps people apply for CalFresh at a food pantry or community clinic could conservatively result in 240 households, or an estimated 500 individuals, receiving \$384,000 in CalFresh benefits in one year (approximately 120,000 healthy meals).¹ Every \$1 donated would provide \$8 in healthy food, in addition to supporting a job in our community.

¹Assumptions based on 2018 data provided by County of San Diego Health & Human Services Agency, Eligibility Operations Department: Avg household benefit in San Diego County = \$246/mo; avg household size is 2.1 people.

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San Diego Hunger Coalition is standing by to provide information and interviews. Please contact Joe Shumate, Communications Officer, at joseph@sdhunger.org.