

# Food & Nutrition Policy: Portfolio Overview



*Center for Public Policy Priorities*

# Outline

- I. The Nutritional State of Texas
- II. Seeking Solutions
- III. Looking Back on Our Accomplishments
- IV. Looking Ahead - Food Policy Priorities in 2012
- V. Our Partners

# **The Nutritional State of Texas: A Tale of Two Problems**

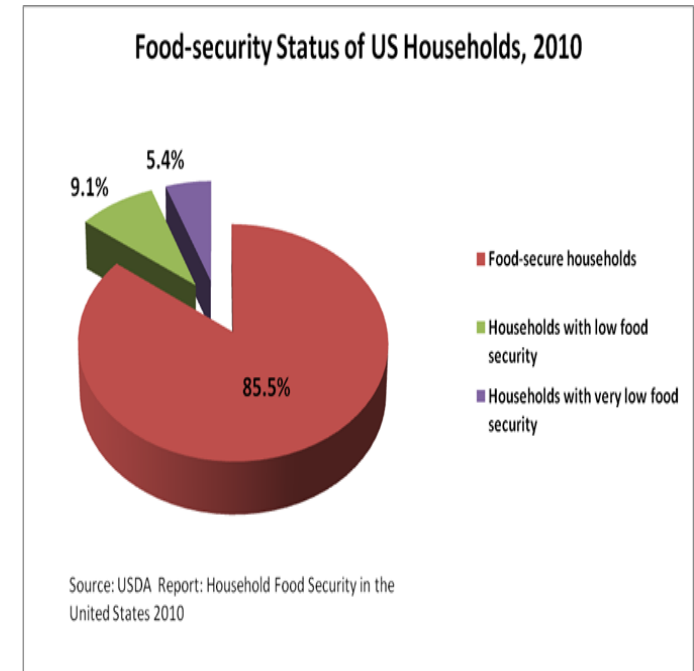
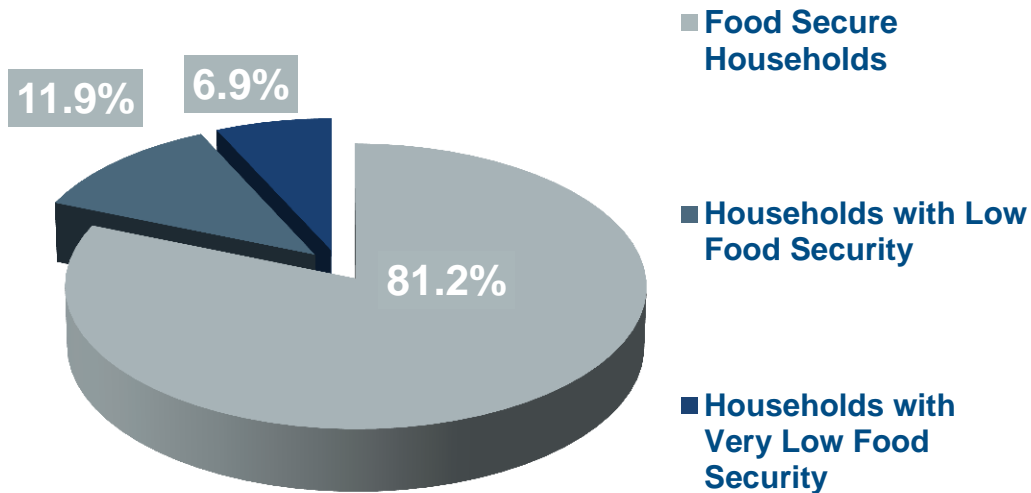
# Texas Plagued by High Rates of Food Insecurity *and* Obesity

- Food insecurity & obesity are flip sides of a coin.
- Low-income people are at a greater risk for both:
  - Inadequate resources
  - Lack of awareness
  - Unsafe neighborhoods/limited access to exercise
  - Limited access to healthy & affordable food
- Both problems come with serious consequences and a hefty price tag for Texas.

# Food Insecurity

- Almost one in five Texas families (18.8%) struggles to afford food, the second-highest rate in the nation.
- Children at the highest risk of hunger, with over one in five children (28.2%) in Texas living in a home without enough food.
- Education and health consequences are great.

# Texas vs. The Nation



# Overweight & Obesity

- 66.7 percent of adult Texans are overweight or obese, up from 64.1 percent in 2005.
- In 2007, almost one-third (32 percent) of Texas high-school students were overweight or obese.
- Health consequences and co-morbidities are great.
- Annual cost of treating obesity-related diseases was \$9.5 billion in 2009, could rise to \$32.5 billion annually by 2030.

# Solutions



# Big Picture

- Long-term solution must attack the root causes of poverty.
- In the short-term:
  - food assistance programs
  - lifestyle interventions
  - changes to built environment
  - increasing access to healthy/affordable food
- Can prevent hunger, fight obesity and improve nutrition.

# Federal Food Assistance Programs

- *Prevent hunger & improve nutrition (SNAP, school lunch/breakfast, CACFP, WIC, Commodities)*
- *Increase family economic security (especially during economic downturn)*
- *Bring federal funds to low-income communities (\$1 in SNAP generate \$1.84 in economic activity)*
- *Free up resources for other programming for children in afterschool/child care/summer programs (“building blocks” concept)*

# Federal Nutrition Programs

<b>Texas Participation in Federal Food Safety Net Programs</b>		
	<b>Recipients</b>	<b>Total Funds</b>
<b>SNAP/Food Stamps</b>	3,551,581	5,447,397,414
<b>School Breakfast</b>	1,387,827	1,358,261,303
<b>School Lunch</b>	2,950,035	
<b>Summer Food</b>	530,474	45,860,494
<b>Child and Adult Care Food Program</b>	228,601	249,233,824
<b>USDA Commodities (for food banks/disaster/school lunch/summer food/Senior Farmer's Market Program)</b>	NA	162,475,258
<b>WIC</b>	1,051,617	882,061,424

# Improving Food Assistance Programs

- Make sure everyone eligible for food assistance is getting it.
- Make sure everyone who needs food assistance is getting it.



# Food Programs Fail to Reach Everyone in Need

- Just over half of eligible population gets SNAP.
- Only 1 in 5 low-income children get summer meals.
- WIC misses 158,000 low-income eligible children
- Since eligibility is tied to the official poverty measure, many needy families don't qualify for federal food assistance.

# Federal Programs, State Choices

- Funding for benefits/meals is 100% federal.
- State/school districts pay some administrative costs.
- National structure and standards,
- Lots of state policy options & flexibility in administrative choices.
- State decisions critical to maximize reach/benefits of programs.

# Looking Back...

- Required low-income school districts required to offer breakfast programs (1995)
  - 99% of schools now offer breakfast
  - Texas has among the best breakfast participation rates in the nation
- Expanded WIC clinic hours (1997)
  - Approx. 90% of eligible women, infants and children participate
- Required low-income school districts to offer summer food programs (1997)
  - Increased number of program sponsors by 60%
  - Quadruped number of children served & increased number of meals served 78%.

# Looking Back...

- Secured state funds for support SNAP (& Medicaid/CHIP) outreach and application assistance (1999)
- Increased access to SNAP through policy simplifications (2001). From 2000 to 2005, enrollment in SNAP increased 65%.
- Secured \$300K in seed funding for food banks to provide fresh produce to hungry families (2001)
  - Today, the Texas Food Bank Network receives \$2 million to purchase and distribute surplus agricultural products from Texas farms.



# Looking Back...

- Improved process to automatically enroll children on SNAP in free school lunch, reducing cost/barriers(2005)
- School breakfast study (2007)
- Increased funding for front-line staff who enroll families in SNAP(2007, 2009)

# 2011 Accomplishments

- Nutrition Programs

- Increased access to summer meal sites by requiring more school districts in low-income communities to sponsor the federally funded Summer Food Program.
- Blocked attempts to restrict consumer choice in SNAP.

- Eligibility and Enrollment

- Maintained current funding levels for eligibility caseworkers.
- Eliminated the intrusive requirement that applicants for TANF and SNAP be finger imaged.
- Enacted legislation to improve the efficiency of eligibility and enrollment processes.
- Improved access to public benefits by enhancing HHSC's partnerships with community-based organizations that provide outreach and application assistance.

**Looking Ahead...**

# HHSC Eligibility Modernization

- Enhanced self-service portal with special portal for CBOs
- CPPP member of External Advisory Committee
- HHSC executive-level modernization project working to streamline policy/processes

# Relevant Interim Charges

- **House Committee on Agriculture & Livestock**
  - Role of **community gardens** and **urban farming efforts** in increasing access to healthy foods
- **House Committee on Human Services**
  - Identify policies to **alleviate food insecurity**, increase **access** to healthy foods, and **incent good nutrition** within existing food assistance programs.
  - Evaluate incorporation of **nutritional standards** in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
  - Monitor congressional activity on the **2012 Farm Bill**.
- **Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee**
  - **Increase the use of Texas agricultural products** in healthy foods readily available to Texas consumers.
  - Role of **community initiatives in reducing obesity/diet-related diseases**.

# Improving Food Access

- **Texas Food Deserts**
  - Texas has the lowest number of supermarkets per capita of any state in the nation.
  - Houston is one of the nation's fastest growing metropolitan areas and yet it has fewer supermarkets per capita than most major cities.
- **Interim charge**
- **The Food Trust (<http://www.thefoodtrust.org/>)**
  - Fresh Food Financing Initiatives
  - Houston Pilot

# Federal Budget

- The Budget Control Act locks in a 10-year downward spiral in spending on discretionary programs, affecting WIC, CSFP, TEFAP Administration
- Automatic across-the-board cuts (“sequestration”) won’t affect SNAP/Food Stamps, child nutrition programs, which are exempt from the cuts.

# 2012 Farm Bill

## Opportunities -

- Address gaps in access.
- Improve adequacy of program benefits.
- Lessen administrative burdens.

## Risks -

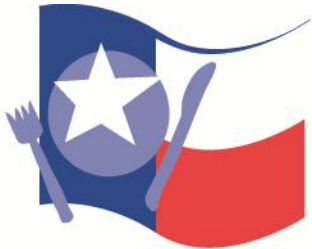
- Across-the-board cuts
- Block grant
- Reductions in eligibility



# Our Partners



**Partnership for  
a Healthy Texas**  
*Conquering Obesity*



**TEXAS FOOD BANK  
NETWORK**



**TEXAS HUNGER INITIATIVE**  
*Baylor University School of Social Work*



**Texas Health and Human Services Commission**



Texas Department of Agriculture's  
**Food and Nutrition**



Mission:  
**Feeding the hungry  
and promoting  
healthy lifestyles.**

**Food and Nutrition**  
80% OF HEALTHY LIVING  
Education, Exercise and Eating Right



# Texas Food Policy Roundtable

**Mission:** Develop, coordinate, and improve the implementation of food policy to address hunger and promote equitable, sustainable, and healthy food in Texas

**Membership:** Christian Life Commission, Texas Impact, Texans Care for Children, Texas Food Bank Network

**Focus Areas:** SNAP Outreach and Access, Summer Food Program, Obesity & Nutrition, Sustainability



<http://txfoodpolicy.org/>

# The Partnership for a Healthy Texas

- **Mission:** Identify and support policy that will have the most impact on the obesity epidemic
- **Membership:** 22 organizations including AHA, TMA, Children at Risk, AARP, American Cancer Society, BCBS of Texas, Texans Care for Children, Texas Pediatrics Society
- **Focus areas:** Texas School Nutrition Policy, Coordinated School Health, Worksite Wellness, Statewide Obesity Prevention Policies, Built Environment



<http://www.partnershipforahealthytexas.org/>

# Expanding Our Capacity

- Expand food policy work at CPPP through
- Partnership with Texas Hunger Initiative, Baylor University
- Current status
  - Some seed money in place
  - Seeking additional funding
  - Hiring new part-time analyst in February