

Understanding the Current Hunger Crisis in Colorado

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What is hunger?

A lack of consistent, reliable access to culturally appropriate and nutritious food

What is food insecurity?

An official government measure of hunger based on survey results



COVID-19 Rise in Food Insecurity

2019: 10% of Coloradans*

Dec 2020: 38% of Coloradans**

*USDA official measure released in September 2020

**Based on Hunger Free Colorado's statewide hunger survey



Who has been most impacted by hunger during the pandemic?

Latinx/People of Color: 52%*

Households with Children: 52%*

People Living with a Disability: 64%*

*Based on Hunger Free Colorado's December 2020 statewide survey



Increased Need Across the State

- Hunger Free Colorado's Food Resource Hotline is receiving more than **four times the number of calls** as pre-pandemic
- Food pantries in our Colorado Food Pantry Network are seeing **two to six times the number of clients**

Why This Matters: Impact of Hunger on Health

- Stunts development of babies' brains and bodies
- Can lead to chronic, diet-related diseases such as diabetes
- Increases depression and risk of mental health crises
- Significantly decreases oral health
- Hinders effective management of chronic diseases

Source: Food Research and Action Center

Exacerbating Challenges

- School building closures have limited access to school meals
 - Before the pandemic, 40% of Colorado children relied on free school meals
- Many families are newly eligible for SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) but are not aware of how to access it
 - SNAP is the primary government program to address hunger – providing 9 times more support than all of the charitable food system combined
- Food bank, food pantries and meal delivery organizations face huge infrastructure and transportation hurdles to get food to families, especially COVID-vulnerable households who need home delivery

Responding to This Crisis

- As TCHF's Pulse Survey showed, the public supports a strong government response to hunger
- Urgent relief is needed at both the state and federal levels, including:
 - An extension of higher SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits until the economy recovers to pre-COVID levels
 - More state funding for SNAP outreach to ensure all who are eligible can access
 - More support for food banks, food pantries, meal delivery organizations, school district nutrition programs, food distribution hubs and local food producers
 - Income assistance from the state and federal government for struggling families

Resources and Information

Statewide Pandemic Food Resources: COFoodFinder.org

Hunger Free Colorado: HungerFreeColorado.org

Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger: EndHungerCO.org

