



Davis Chhoa - 25th Emerson National Hunger Fellowship Class

A Direct Service Approach to Reducing Food Insecurity among Immigrant Communities in Minneapolis

Hunger Free Communities Report



01.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A DIRECT SERVICE APPROACH TO REDUCING FOOD INSECURITY

This report highlights food insecurity among immigrant communities in Minnesota and describes how CAPI USA provides direct services to households experiencing hunger.

Hunger is one of the most pressing issues faced by millions of people in the United States. In 2017, 11.8% of households or 1 in 8 Americans were food insecure at least some time during the year [1].

Since the fight to end hunger in the United States started decades ago, federal legislation and programs, such as the Farm Bill and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), have been implemented to eliminate food insecurity nationwide. Concurrently, individuals and local organizations at the community level have strived to provide food to individuals experiencing hunger through food pantries and soup kitchens. Direct service has been crucial to alleviating hunger among food insecure families while more permanent solutions are implemented to eliminate hunger.

CAPI USA serves as a model for a nonprofit organization to be an anti-hunger leader in its local community. Through its community-engaged, multi-service model, CAPI supports food insecure households beyond simply just providing food through its food shelf. CAPI holistically focuses on connecting food insecure households with additional social support resources needed to be economically independent and self-determinate, while also meeting the cultural and linguistic needs of its clients.

02.

FOOD INSECURITY IN NUMBERS

FOOD INSECURITY - household-level economic and social measure of the lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life [1]

HUNGER - an individual-level physiological condition that may result from food insecurity [1]

UNITED STATES

In 2017, approximately 11.8% of households, or 40 million people (including 12 million children) in the United States were food insecure. [1]

HOUSEHOLD FOOD INSECURITY RATES IN THE U.S. [1]

2017	11.8%	▼
2015	12.7%	▼
2013	14.3%	▼
2011	14.9%	▲
2009	14.7%	▲
2007	11.1%	▲

MINNESOTA

Minnesota has the country's 6th lowest food insecurity rate in the country (behind HI, NJ, ND, CO, and NH). [2]

In 2016, approximately 1 in 11 people, or 508,630 Minnesotans, were struggling with hunger. [3]

The amount of additional money required to meet the needs of food insecure Minnesotans is \$258,531,000. [3]

DISTRICT 5

Minnesota's 5th congressional district includes Minneapolis and the surrounding suburbs.

In 2016, the food insecurity rate in District 5 was 13.9%, the highest among any district in the state. [3]

In 2016, approximately 131,950 people, or every 1 in 9 individuals in Hennepin county were facing food insecurity. [3]

03.

IMPACTS OF FOOD INSECURITY

HUNGER IS **NOT** AN ISOLATED ISSUE

According to a study conducted by the 2016 Hunger in America by Feeding America, many food insecure households cope with food insecurity by making sacrifices to other basic needs due to limited financial resources. [4]



69% of people
had to choose
between food
and utilities



67% of people
had to choose
between
food and
transportation



66% of people
had to choose
between food
and medicine



57% of people
had to choose
between food
and housing



31% of people
had to choose
between food
and education

Food insecurity and the associated impacts of poverty are social determinants of health that have significant health implications on individuals, such as increased risk for chronic diseases, mental illnesses, and premature mortality. [5]

The implications for children experiencing food insecurity may carry through into adulthood, impacting child development, educational attainment rates, and increased risk for chronic disease and mental illness development. [5]

04.

IMMIGRANTS & REFUGEES IN MINNESOTA

IMMIGRANT - a person who comes to a country to take up permanent or temporary residence [6]

REFUGEE - an individual who is no longer able to live in their home country due a reasonable fear or proof or persecution due to social identity or political opinion [6]

Minnesota has had a long history of welcoming immigrants and refugees to the "Land of 10,000 Lakes." In 2017, there were approximately **500,000 foreign-born individuals** living in Minnesota (8.7% of the state population), consisting of citizens and non-citizens, students, workers, and refugees. [7] Of the half a million foreign born individuals in Minnesota, approximately 80% live in the Twin Cities 7 county metropolitan area (Minneapolis, Saint Paul, and surrounding suburbs). [7] The largest groups of foreign-born individuals in Minnesota are from **Mexico, Laos, Somalia, India, Vietnam, Thailand (including Hmong), China, Ethiopia, Korea, Canada, and Liberia.** [7]



In 2017, 18% of foreign-born individuals in Minnesota were below the federal poverty level compared to 8.7% of native-born individuals. [7]

Minnesota has the largest number of refugees per capita in the entire country. [8]

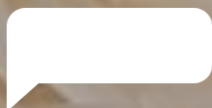
Minnesota has the largest Somali population and the second largest Hmong population in the United States. [9]

Immigrants and refugees are resilient individuals who have overcome much adversity to resettle in the United States in search of a better life and more opportunities for themselves and their families. Many have experienced hunger, poverty, violence, war torn homelands, and politically-corrupt states prior to facing the challenges of navigating a new life in the United States. Therefore, immigrants are a particular subgroup of the general population that face unique challenges in achieving economic stability and overall well-being, such as linguistic and cultural barriers. Community organizations and government agencies are crucial to providing immigrants and refugees with the support and assistance needed to thrive in their new country.

"Vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly, ethnic minorities, and low-income households are disproportionately affected by food insecurity, despite the extensive private and public safety net in the United States." [10]

Hunger and food insecurity can be experienced by all individuals, regardless of social identity. However, food insecurity rates among the immigrant populations are disproportionately higher than those of the general population due to challenges faced securing financial resources and navigating the social service sector as a newcomer to the United States. [10]

IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE BARRIERS TO HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS [11]



LANGUAGE & LITERACY - Many new immigrants and refugees do not speak English proficiently or have limited literacy skills. Language barriers prevents individuals from communicating with service providers or understanding program materials.



CULTURE - Immigrants and refugees may not be familiar with American cultural norms of seeking social services due to the unavailability of such programs in their home countries. Furthermore, cultural food traditions may not be addressed by food assistance programs (ex: lack of culturally-specific foods).



LOGISTICS & TRANSPORTATION - Not all immigrants may have a car or be able to afford the financial expenses needed to travel to social service agencies and offices. Work and family obligations could make it difficult for individuals to seek assistance, while balancing other responsibilities.



MISTRUST & FEAR OF MISTREATMENT - Many immigrants and refugees fear seeking assistance from government programs may result in mistreatment or deportation of themselves or family members. Misconceptions about public charge rules may further deter individuals from seeking public assistance.



COMPLEX APPLICATIONS & ELIGIBILITY - The eligibility criteria, rules, and application process for many social programs are often complicated and vary by state and immigration status. The complexity of obtaining assistance may deter individuals from seeking needed help from programs, such as SNAP.



CAPI USA is an immigrant-led, nonprofit organization that is dedicated to helping Minnesota's immigrants, refugees, and low-income individuals gain access to jobs, housing, food, health education, youth and senior social services in order to promote economic independence, self-determination and social equality. CAPI strives to achieve this mission by providing culturally-specific and linguistically-appropriate direct services in three program areas to clients: health and human services programs, workforce development, and civic engagement.

CAPI's overall food program strategy aims to help people stretch their budgets and obtain alternative or complementary sources of food. The first point of contact for most CAPI clients is the CAPI food shelf, where clients are then screened and referred to both resources at CAPI and to local partner organizations. Through a holistic approach to addressing hunger, CAPI uplifts food insecure households by connecting them with support programs and community partners to help them achieve overall wellness and food security.

Community organizations such as CAPI USA are crucial to being the mediators between immigrant communities and food assistance resources in order to ultimately eliminate hunger in the United States. Without organizations such as CAPI USA connecting directly with underrepresented community members, food programs and resources available may not be as efficacious and reach these communities that are challenged by linguistic and cultural barriers.





FOOD SHELF

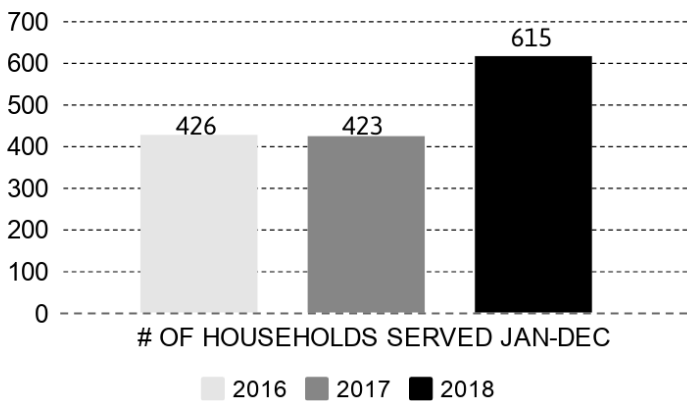
CULTURALLY-SPECIFIC FOODS - food items cultural/ethnic communities request and/or food that can be used to make culturally specific meals [12]

CLIENT-CHOICE MODEL - food pantry model that allows people seeking food assistance to choose for themselves what products they receive [13]

Since 1982, the CAPI food shelf has been providing emergency food assistance to families across the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Since relocating to Brooklyn Center in 2018, the food shelf has been redesigned to utilize a client-choice model in order to reduce food waste, serve clients with utmost dignity and respect, and tailor the food shelf experience to best meet individual needs. With a mission focused on serving immigrants and refugees, the CAPI food shelf emphasizes providing culturally-specific food options for clients to be able to receive food assistance congruent with their cultural and nutritional needs.

Although food shelves serve as a temporary solution to the issue of hunger in the United States, food shelves are essential and vital to redistributing excess food to people experiencing food insecurity until more permanent policies and economic changes are implemented. [14]

250,000+ POUNDS OF FOOD DISTRIBUTED TO 2,500+ INDIVIDUALS IN 2018



CULTURALLY-SPECIFIC FOODS
PROVIDED IN 2018

- JASMINE RICE
- VERMICELLI RICE NOODLES
- CANNED BAMBOO SHOOTS
- COCONUT MILK
- BEAN THREAD NOODLES
- CORN HUSKS
- NAPA CABAGGE
- CHAYOTE SQUASH
- PERSIMMONS



SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)

SNAP is a federal food assistance program that provides supplemental income to low-income households to stretch their food budgets and purchase additional food. The MN Department of Human Services has partnered with CAPI USA, to increase SNAP outreach to eligible households in disproportionately food insecure immigrant and refugee communities. [15] CAPI screens every food shelf client for SNAP eligibility, as well as conducts informative outreach sessions at local community events and organizations. Community outreach allows CAPI to engage with immigrants and refugees who may be facing linguistic or cultural barriers that prevent them from otherwise learning about and applying for the benefit program.

CAPI USA manages **10 community gardens** located across the Twin Cities metropolitan area and provides land access to clients interested in growing their own fresh produce. For many clients, the community gardening program provides the opportunity for individuals who may not have access to personal land to be able to engage in gardening alongside a community of fellow gardeners. CAPI prioritizes allocating food shelf clients to garden plots and encourages gardening as a complementary method of securing additional food.

In addition to decreasing food insecurity by promoting self-sufficiency in growing one's own food, existing research and clients have reported the following benefits of gardening:

- outreach sites**
 - non-profit organizations
 - religious centers
 - community colleges
 - adult basic education classes
 - community centers
 - public libraries
 - community health fairs
 - grocery stores
 - food shelves

COMMUNITY GARDENS

- promotes physical activity**
 - encourages fresh produce consumption
- increases availability of fresh produce year-round**
 - facilitates relationship building
- supports mental health and stress management**
 - saves money
- fosters cultural practices**
 - [16], [17]





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