

Mendocino County: A Profile of Poverty, Hunger & Food Assistance

Local Demographics ¹	Mendocino	%	CA
Total Population	84,736		
Child Population (0-18)	21,176		
Population in Poverty	13,505	15.9%	14.2%
Children in Poverty (0-18)	4,775	22.5%	19.5%
Food Insecure Adults with and Without Hunger	13,000	28.2*%	28.3%
Food Insecure Adults with Hunger	5,000	12*%	8.3%

*Estimate includes: Lake

Child Nutrition Indicators ²	Mendocino	CA
Anemia, 0-5 yrs.	16.2%	13.5%
Anemia, 5-20 yrs.	11.8%	12.3%
Short Stature, 0-5 yrs.	3.8%	5.0%
Short Stature, 5-20 yrs.	7.7%	6.8%
Underweight, 0-5 yrs.	9.3%	5.3%
Underweight, 5-20 yrs.	1.8%	2.7%
Overweight*, 2-5 yrs.	14.5%	16.6%
Overweight*, 5-20 yrs.	19.7%	20.0%

*Poverty impairs one's ability to access nutritious foods, which may cause one to be overweight.

Despite California's economic and agricultural prosperity, over one in four is hungry or at serious risk of hunger—significantly worse than the nation as a whole. Hunger is a symptom of poverty; far too many families experience devastating health consequences when their low wages or modest public benefits can't cover the cost of housing, utilities and food.

Underutilization of Federal Food Programs

Even as the demand for charitable food assistance increases, federal food programs are failing to serve eligible, hungry families. Bureaucratic hassles and the stigma of receiving assistance prevent people from getting the help they need. Federal food programs—if fully utilized—are essential for fighting hunger in Mendocino County.

To help prevent hunger in Mendocino County:

- ◆ Support state legislation to eliminate barriers in the Food Stamp Program.
- ◆ Urge school officials to ensure that every school in Mendocino County provides breakfast.
- ◆ Contact school and community leaders in your county about expanding the Summer Food Program so that needy children don't go hungry when school is out.
- ◆ Work with childcare centers and homes to ensure that children get nutritious meals through the federally funded Child & Adult Care Food Program.

Mendocino County Food Assistance Programs	# Eligible	# Eligible Not Served	% Eligible Not Served	County Rank (1= least utilized)
Food Stamp Program ³	13,505	7,697	57.0%	41
Women, Infants and Children (WIC) ⁴	4,216	1,390	33.0%	12
National School Lunch Program ⁵	7,211	1,695	23.5%	26
School Breakfast Program ⁵	7,211	4,241	58.8%	54
Summer Food Service Program ⁵	9,956	7,196	72.3%	46
Child Care Food Program	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available

Background Information on federal food programs:

Food Stamp Program

As our nation's largest and most comprehensive nutrition assistance program, the Food Stamp Program provides an average benefit of \$78 per month to almost 2 million people in California. Citizens and legal immigrants are usually eligible if they meet certain income and asset requirements. The most basic criteria is that a household must have an income below 130 percent of the Federal Poverty Line (FPL).

WIC

WIC is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, a program designed for low-income women and children up to age 5. Through WIC, families receive vouchers each month for specific nutritious foods, as well as individual counseling and health care referrals. To qualify, families must live below 185 percent FPL and must be at risk of nutrition-related health problems.

School & Community Nutrition Programs

Through the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, schools provide students of all ages with the nutritious meals they need in order to learn. Enrolled children who live below 130 percent FPL can receive free meals, while children living above 130 percent but below 185 percent FPL qualify for meals at a reduced price.

Through the Summer Food Service Program, schools, non-profit agencies, and recreation programs provide free lunch to students when school is not in session. Students who qualify for free or reduced-priced lunch are eligible. In addition, all children in areas with over 50 percent free and reduced-price lunch enrollment are eligible for free lunch during the summer.

CACFP

The Child and Adult Care Food Program is the only program that provides funding for meals served in a childcare setting to children up to age 13 and impaired adults. Through this program, certified child care programs are reimbursed for 2 meals and 1 snack each day, with higher reimbursements for those living at or below the 185 percent FPL.

Family size ^a	100% Federal Poverty Line	130% Federal Poverty Line	185% Federal Poverty Line
1	\$739	\$960	\$1,366
2	\$995	\$1,294	\$1,841
3	\$1,252	\$1,628	\$2,316
4	\$1,509	\$1,961	\$2,791
5	\$1,765	\$2,295	\$3,266

Footnotes:

1. Local Demographics, 2000 U.S. Census (1999 estimates) and UCLA's California Health Interview Survey 2002.
2. Child Health Indicators, Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance System, Children's Medical Services Branch, CA Dept. of Health Services, 2001
3. Food Stamp Program: U.S. Census Bureau and CA Dept. of Social Services, December 2002
4. WIC: California WIC Association, January 2002
5. School Nutrition Programs, California Department of Education, Nutrition Services Division, 2001-2002
6. Income guidelines for July 1, 2002 to June 30, 2003, USDA's Food and Nutrition Service.

Access this profile with the data methodology at

<http://www.cfpa.net/countyprofile/CountyProfiles2003.htm>



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