Preble Street

Maine Hunger Initiative
August 2010
Overview

I. History

II. Preble Street Food Programs

III. Food Pantry Analysis

IV. Recommendations
Preble Street Food Programs

This year, Preble Street will serve 480,000 meals or 40,000 monthly.

Meals served monthly by program:

• Resource Center - 19,624
• Florence House - 2,094
• Teen Center - 1,733
• Food Pantry - 16,556
Maine Hunger Initiative: Organizing

- Engaging food pantries
- Technical assistance and resource sharing
- Comprehensive food pantry list
- Regional food pantry meetings
- Farm to Pantry Project
Maine Hunger Initiative: Advocacy

Partnering with Maine Center for Economic Policy and Maine Equal Justice Partners to develop and implement a long-range plan for ending hunger in Maine
Maine Hunger Initiative: Accomplishments

- Coalition building
- Governor's Workgroup
- Food for Families ARRA project
- North East Regional Anti Hunger Network (NERAHN)
- New York City Coalition Against Hunger AmeriCorps VISTA
Hunger in Maine

According to the USDA, Maine’s level of food insecurity rose *more than any other state* in the nation between 2000 and 2005.

- Maine ranks 9th in the nation for food insecurity
- Maine ranks 2nd in the nation for very low food security
- Maine DHHS reported a 30% rise in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program participation between 2008 and 2010
Analysis of Food Pantries in Cumberland County, Maine
Methodology

* 48 pantries surveyed with a 96% response rate
Collectively food pantries in Cumberland County serve a total of 5,107 households per month ranging from 1 to 600 households.
Collectively food pantries in Cumberland County serve a total of 13,613 individuals per month ranging from 3 to 2,000 individuals per month.
Increased Need

• Food pantries have seen an average increase of 42% in the number of clients they serve in the past year

• 21% of the food pantries report that they have experienced more than a 100% increase
Food pantries in Cumberland County have been in operation as recently as 1 year and as long as 33 years.
Operations

• 74% of food pantries are entirely run by volunteers

• 98% of food pantries are dependent upon volunteers to operate the food pantry

• 38% of food pantries need more volunteers
Transporting Food

- Over a third of the food pantries report that they find it somewhat or very difficult to transport food
- 48% of the food pantries rely on volunteers to use their own cars to transport food
- Only 11% of food pantries are receiving food deliveries
Physical Space

• 28% of food pantries report that they do not have adequate space to operate their food pantry out of.

• 20% of food pantries do not have freezers or refrigerators on site
Services Offered

- 67% of food pantries also give out non-food items
- 61% of food pantries offer deliveries to homebound individuals

*other = furniture, medicine, and homework assistance
• 49% of food pantries surveyed report that they have no operating budget.

• Of those that do have a budget, 52% have a budget under $500.
Of the pantries that have a budget 85% of food pantry’s funding comes from private donations from individuals, businesses, civic and faith based organizations, united way, and foundations)
81% of food pantry budgets go towards purchasing food

Where pantries spend their money

Food 81%
Rent/Utilities 4%
Transportation 6%
Personnel 8%
Other 1%

Other = program supplies
Food Sources

Breakdown of all of the food in Cumberland County

- Donations: 25%
- Discount: 5%
- USDA: 9%
- Retail Grocery: 10%
- Wayside Food Rescue: 13%
- Local Food Rescue: 15%
- Good Shepherd Food Bank: 23%
Food Sources

48% of the food pantries surveyed do not receive food from Good Shepherd Food Bank and Wayside Food Rescue

Reasons given include:

• “Another food pantry nearby already receives food from them”
• “We are not a 501c3”
• “Food pantry chooses to offer assistance to anyone who needs it”
• “Food pantry does not want to ask questions of their clients”
• “We would have to limit those we serve to specific geographic location.”
• “Don’t want to be bothered with all of the paperwork”
• “Too far away”
• “No transportation”
• “We would need the food to be delivered”
• “Cost of membership”
• “They don't have what we need”
• “We get enough food from Hannaford’s”
Food Sources

54% of the food pantries surveyed do not receive USDA/TEFAP food

Reasons given include:

• “Don't want to ask questions of the recipients”
• “Financial info difficult to obtain”
• “Have never had a need to go further than Good Shepherd”
• “We have made do without this service”
• “We do not accept government help there are always strings attached”
• “Did not know about it”
82% of food pantries deal with the dilemma of increased need and decreasing supplies. In response they have had to modify their operations by turning people away, reducing the amount of food given out or reducing their hours.
How clients find out about food pantries

94% of pantries rely on word of mouth to inform the community of their presence

[Bar chart showing the methods by which clients discover food pantries, with Word of mouth at 94%, followed by Church bulletins, Referral from General Assistance, and so on.]
How difficult is it to access emergency food

- Only 30% of food pantries serve anybody regardless of residency.
- 70% of the food pantries serve only residents of the town/neighborhood they are located and possibly the neighboring town.
What client’s need to provide to get food

35% of food pantries have no requirements for people to receive food

- Percentage of food pantries with this requirement
  - Proof of residence: 40%
  - USDA form: 25%
  - Proof of income: 15%
  - Social Security #: 10%
  - Photo ID: 10%
  - Referral from town: 5%
  - Referral from agency: 5%

Eligibility requirements
How long food is intended to last

80% of the food given out at food pantries is intended to last a week or less
How often clients can visit a food pantry

- Clients can receive food at least once every 1 to 2 weeks from 50% of food pantries
- Clients can receive food every 1 to 3 months from 41% of the food pantries
- Clients can receive food anytime they need it from 9% of the food pantries

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Vision for a Model Food Pantry:

From Accessibility to Advocacy

1) Accessibility
2) Food Choices
3) Food Sourcing
4) Strong Volunteer Base
5) Program Development
6) Communication/Collaboration
7) Advocacy
Vision for a Model Food Pantry

Accessibility

• Open to anyone
• Extended hours of operation
• No documentation required
• Centrally located
• Home Deliveries
• Community outreach and publicity
Vision for a Model Food Pantry

Food Choices

• Variety of food choices

• Client choice

• Reliable supply of produce, dairy, and meat

• Nutritious and well balanced

• Food for special populations and diets
Vision for a Model Food Pantry

Food Sourcing

• Reduce dependency on small food donations and occasional food drive

• Increase funding to purchase from food bank

• Delivery to food pantries

• Adequate space and storage
Vision for a Model Food Pantry

Strong Volunteer Base

- Effective recruitment
- Volunteer coordination
- Clear policies and procedures
- Availability of training and technical assistance
- Variety of roles and responsibilities
- Volunteer appreciation
Vision for a Model Food Pantry

Program Development

• Secure donor base
• Effective fundraising
• Consistent reporting
• Fiscal accountability
• 501(c)(3) status
• Board development
• Public awareness
Vision for a Model Food Pantry

Communication/Collaboration

- Work strategically with other food pantries and the community (United Way, schools, farms, etc)
- Share food and other resources (van, bookkeeper)
- Connect clients to other resources
- Participate in regional food pantry meetings
Vision for a Model Food Pantry

Advocacy

• Awareness of public policy decisions
• Participation in legislative initiatives
• Connection to local government
• Community engagement
• Promote long term solutions to hunger and poverty
Recommendations

- Incorporate identified best practices at Cumberland County food pantries
- Engage people frequenting the food pantries in assessment and improvement of the emergency food system
- Offer poverty simulation in conjunction with Cooperative Ext
- Increase food sources and availability to food pantries
- Explore and pursue underutilized federal, state and private funding for anti-hunger efforts
- Introduce legislation
- Advocate for systemic changes with statewide partners
Presentation
Slide Notes
Preble Street is known for working collaboratively with public and private partners to meet urgent needs, advocate for social change, and create innovative solutions to ending hunger and homelessness. In 2009 Preble Street worked closely with United Ways throughout Maine on the Food for Maine project which raised $300,000 for food to pantries across the state. Preble Street also works with United Way of Greater Portland on the Pantry Project, an ongoing food drive which benefits food pantries throughout Cumberland County.

After experiencing increasingly frequent bare shelves in the food pantry, Preble Street learned that the USDA Bonus Commodities coming to Maine had decreased from over 3 million lbs. of food in 2002 to less than 300,000 lbs in 2007. Unbelievably, there was no public recognition of this, no communication about it and no resulting assessment of its impact on Maine’s emergency food system. Emergency food providers continued to keep working the best they could with what little they had. The lack of any state wide advocacy effort dealing with the issue of hunger became glaringly obvious. Around this same time, from 2000 to 2005, the USDA reported that the rate of hunger grew more rapidly in Maine than in any other state in the nation. It was from these turn of events that Preble Street launched the Maine Hunger Initiative.

In December 2009 the Maine Hunger Initiative (MHI) team began work in Cumberland County, Community Organizers spent time at food pantries, learning from their coordinators and volunteers, provided technical assistance, disseminated information about programs such as 211 Maine, the University of Maine Cooperative Extension’s Eat Well program and the USDA Commodity Supplemental Food Program and established a Farm To Pantry initiative.

One of the Maine Hunger Initiative’s first tasks was to compile a comprehensive list of food pantries in Cumberland County. This was accomplished by cross-referencing the lists available from 211 Maine, Good Shepherd Food Bank, Southern Maine Area Agency on Aging and the USDA’s Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). The initial count of food pantries from all of these sources listed approximately 30 food pantries. After MHI data gathering and organizing, it was determined that 49 food pantries were located throughout Cumberland County.
The Maine Hunger Initiative has taken the information gathered from food pantries and created a comprehensive food pantry list including location, hours of operation, and eligibility requirements. MHI has shared this list with Cumberland County food pantries and other organizations including 211 Maine, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), local Healthy Maine Partnerships (HMP), People’s Regional Opportunity Program (PROP), Southern Maine Area Agency on Aging (SMAAA), the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Cumberland County United Way, and the Women Infants and Children (WIC) program.

The Maine Hunger Initiative staff has held three sets of regional food pantry meetings, one in the Lakes Region, Casco Bay, and Portland/Southern Cumberland County. At these meetings food pantry coordinators share what they are most proud of, challenges that they face, and solutions they have found. Food pantries coordinators and volunteers express continued enthusiasm about having smaller regional meetings to share ideas and learn from each other.

As the Maine Hunger Initiative has become more aware of the pervasiveness of hunger, MHI has also become acutely aware that Maine is one of a few states without an organization or an advocacy effort targeting hunger. MHI has partnered up with Maine Center for Economic Policy (MECEP) and Maine Equal Justice Partners (MEJP) to address hunger throughout our state and explore legislative and policy changes that will ultimately alleviate hunger. The Maine Hunger Initiative is working on addressing both the operational challenges of relieving hunger and the systemic problems that cause hunger.
Slide 6 - Maine Hunger Initiative: Accomplishments

The Maine Hunger Initiative learned from and worked with other successful anti-hunger coalitions including the Mid-Coast Food Security Coalition, supported by the United Way of Bath and Mid-Coast Hunger Prevention in Brunswick and the New Hampshire Food Providers Network a partnership between the United Way of Greater Seacoast, Rockingham Community Action, the New Hampshire Food Bank and the University of New Hampshire.

The Maine Hunger Initiative has been participating in the workgroup created by the Governor's executive order that is addressing electronic accessibility to public benefits, gathering information from food pantry recipients, Preble Street’s Homeless Voices for Justice, and community caseworkers helped provide input into this process.

Recently, Preble Street partnered with Hannaford Brothers' and DHHS to access over a million dollars in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) money to provide a one-time $100 food supplement gift card to approximately 13,800 Maine families with minor children who are living in poverty.

The Maine Hunger Initiative was selected to be one of the two Maine representatives in the Northeast Regional Anti-Hunger Network (NERAHN). NERAHN is a coalition of anti-hunger agencies from the seven states in the northeast region (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut) and national representation from USDA’s Food and Nutrition Services, Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), and Bread for the World. NERAHN’s mission is to reduce hunger by maximizing resources through collaborative efforts; and to work collectively to design and implement action on state, regional, and national levels.

On a national level the Maine Hunger Initiative has been chosen to participate in the New York City Coalition Against Hunger (NYCCH)’s Anti-Hunger Empowerment and Opportunity Corps, an AmeriCorps VISTA project which includes representation from approximately 20 states across the country. This project has been initiated by Joel Berg, Executive Director of the NYCCAHI and author of All You Can Eat, How Hungry is America.
Slide 7 - Hunger in Maine

Statistical information regarding hunger in Maine is taken from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) 2009 report, Measuring Food Security in the United States. It is revealed in this report that Maine is the most food insecure state in New England. Food insecurity is the current language used by the government to define hunger. Food security for a household means access by all members at all times to enough food for an active, healthy lifestyle. Not all Mainers have access to enough healthy food to meet their needs.

Low food security (food insecurity without hunger) - reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet, with little or no indication of reduced food intake.
Very low food security (food insecurity with hunger) - reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.

Slide 9 - Methodology

The map of Cumberland County shows the location of the 49 food pantries in the county.

Slide 10 - Households Served

There are 10,384 low-income households in Cumberland County, 10% of the 107,989 total number of households (US Census, 2000). Cumberland County food pantries are feeding 5,107 low-income households per month. The range of number of households served each month is indicative of how disparate the emergency food system is. Half (50%) of the food pantries in Cumberland County serve less than 50 households per month whereas 7% of the food pantries serve over 500 households per month.

Slide 12 - Increased Need

Food pantry coordinators report difficulty responding to the increased demand for food. Challenges include the inability to gauge the number of people who will need their services each week. This increase is attributed to first time food pantry users who are impacted by high unemployment and high cost of living. Food pantry coordinators report that they are serving more families and elderly clients.
Slide 13 – History

The graph depicts the growth of food pantries in Cumberland County over the past 33 years. In 1977 there were 2 food pantries in Cumberland county. Today there are 49. One-quarter of these food pantries have opened in the last 5 years.

Slide 14 – Operations

Coordinators report that staffing is one of the biggest challenges in operating a food pantry. Volunteers are often older and unable to perform physical tasks such as loading and unloading food boxes.

Slide 15 - Transporting Food

In addition to the physical burden of transporting food, volunteers are using personal vehicles and money to pick up and deliver the food to the pantry and to pantry recipients. Food pantries in the Lakes Region need to travel up to 1 ½ hours one way to access items from Good Shepherd Food Bank in Portland.

Slide 16 – Space

Having adequate space to properly store cold and dry goods is a challenge to pantries. Adequate space and storage allows for more access to nutritious but perishable foods. More space also allows for a client choice distribution model.

Slide 17 - Services Offered

In many cases food pantries provide services that reach beyond the immediate need of food. This can be challenging for food pantries that do not have case managers to help clients access additional resources such as housing, employment and mental health services. Despite this challenge many pantries extend their services to meet the greater needs of clients.

Slide 18 – Budgets

Almost half of the food pantries report that they have no operating budget. Of those that do, 52% of them have a budget under $500 per month. This chart demonstrates the vast range in food pantry size and capacity. Food pantries have little or no budgets and are dependent upon volunteers, yet they are expected to be sustainable and to meet the needs of their communities.
Slide 19 - Where funding comes from

It is extremely time consuming for volunteers to solicit adequate funding from such a variety of private and public sources. Food pantries want to have reliable funding sources to be able to plan on purchasing sufficient amounts of food each month.

Slide 20 - Where food pantries spend their money

Collectively, food pantries spend an average of 81% of their budget on food. Many food pantries put 100% of their budget towards purchasing food. One food pantry reports that they spend all of the money they receive on utility bills.

Slide 21 - Food Sources

In addition to seeing an increase in the number of clients they are serving each week pantries also report that they are seeing a decrease in available food resources. Cumberland County food pantries are only receiving on average of 50% of their food from existing hunger relief organizations such as Good Shepherd Food Bank, Wayside Food Rescue, and USDA/TEFAP food. Best Practices for emergency food pantries indicate the importance of maximizing the amount of food that a pantry receives from existing hunger relief organizations.

Slide 24 - Response to increased need

Findings regarding increase in need correlate with the data from the U.S Mayors 2009 Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness where it is reported that 76% of their food pantry respondents have had to make some type of cutbacks in the past year. Cumberland County data is higher than the national average in that 82% of food pantries report making some type of cutback in the past year.

Slide 25 - How clients find out about food pantries

Almost all (94%) of food pantries inform the community of their services through word of mouth. Pantry coordinators report that stigma and shame prevent many people, particularly the elderly, from accessing emergency food.
Slide 26 - How difficult it is to access emergency food

Much of the information received through the food pantry survey also helps one understand how clients might experience the emergency food system. There are many reasons why someone may want to access a food pantry outside of the town they live in. They may be too embarrassed to access a food pantry in their own town or it may be easier to access a food pantry in the town they work in or where friends and family live.

Slide 27 - What people must provide to get food

The majority of food pantries (65%) have some type of requirements for people to receive food. Food pantries often require proof of income, residence, and benefits.

Slide 28 - How long food is intended to last

The information gathered from the food pantry survey also helps one to understand the dilemma that people face in accessing food for their family. Only 18% of the food pantries are giving out enough food to last more than a week.

Slide 29 - How often people can use a food pantry

Half (50%) of the food pantries report that are open once every 1-2 weeks or as needed whereas 41% of the food pantries allow you to receive food every 1-3 months. For many families their monthly expenses exceed their wages leaving them little or no money available to put towards maintaining an adequate food supply. It is not surprising that many families, depending on the number of children in their household, may need to access a food pantry 3 or 4 times a month just to keep food on the table.
Slide 38 - Recommendations

Conducting a client satisfaction survey can help gather information about what type of impact food assistance programs are making in someone’s life. A client satisfaction survey can be used to engage people who utilize food pantries and help measure progress towards the food pantry’s goals.

A poverty simulation workshop can raise awareness around the barriers experienced by low-income people seeking services. A poverty simulation is an interactive experience to help people understand what is like to live with a shortage of money and resources.

The Cumberland County food pantry analysis power point presentation and other demographic information that you have about your pantry can be used as a tool to advocate for clients and to leverage funds. Other ways to raise public awareness and to advocate for ending hunger is to invite candidates/officials to tour food pantries, attend candidate’s forums, make recommendations for specific legislation, and to engage friends, family, and colleagues in conversations about hunger in the community.

One example of underutilized federal dollars that are available to help fight hunger is money available through USDA’s Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Currently Maine is only serving 16% of children who eligible to receive a free meal in the summer. Collaborations with local partners to expand summer food service sites are encouraged.