

NCEF Hunger Initiative

Since 2011, NCEF has invested over \$10,145,000 into the community.

The Issue

Food plays an important role in long-term growth and development of children, and our community. Children facing food insecurity – the fear of not knowing where their next meal will come from – lack the energy to focus in class, engage with their peers, and grow into healthy adults. The impacts of hunger on a child's physical and mental health are significant, affecting their behavior, academic achievement and wellbeing. For children living in poverty, often the only reliable food source they receive is through school meal programs. The free and reduced lunch offerings in schools provide regular hot meals during the day, and children often depend on afterschool and summer programs to provide meals outside of school hours.

Good nutrition is important for the long-term health of a child. Ensuring children have consistent access to and awareness of nutritional foods helps to curb obesity rates and improve the physical and mental health of a child. Of course, much of a child's diet is provided by their family, so efforts to educate a child about nutritional options are more effective when the entire family is engaged and empowered to make better food choices.

Fast Facts*

- In the United States, 1 in 9 people – 1 in 6 children, struggle with hunger. As of 2021 in Collier County, 32,210 residents, including **7,110 children**, lack consistent access to nutritious food.
- In Collier County, **65% of children** qualify for free or reduced-price meals.
- **Children facing hunger** are more likely to repeat a grade in elementary school, experience impairments in development, and/or have more social and behavioral problems.
- **Eating a healthy breakfast** is associated with improved cognitive function (especially memory), reduced absenteeism, and improved mood.
- **84% of households** served by Feeding America report buying the cheapest food — instead of healthy food — in order to provide enough to eat.

*Data from Feeding America and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Collaborative Successes

- Since 2011, **over 30,000,000 meals** have been distributed to children and families

in need, with pantries serving 1,000+ families weekly.

- Together, **partners have collaborated** to expand the number of people served in Collier County, contributing to inter-agency coordination and ensuring no duplication of services.
- Partners provide food to more than **39 organizations and non-profit agencies**, including 31 that focus on children's needs.
- Meeting the needs of children beyond school hours, partners created an Out-of-School Feeding Program to provide meals after school and during the summer for over **500 children annually**, as well as providing boxed food with 15-20 pounds of food, serving an entire family.

Meet Allison, age 5

Allison is the youngest of six kids. With her father incarcerated, Allison and her siblings rely on their mother, Florencia, to provide. Florencia works in the tomato fields in Immokalee. When times are hard, she relies on NCEF hunger partner Harry Chapin Food Bank for food. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Florencia and her family received Harry's Helpings kits, which contained nutritious food for 15 meals. Currently Allison is attending voluntary pre-kindergarten at Pathways Early Education Center of Immokalee and thriving.



How your dollars make a difference:

\$1,000 provides 4,000 meals for families in need

\$2,500 provides one mobile pantry in our community serving nearly 200 children

\$5,000 provides 1,200 students with a hot lunch during the summer months.

\$10,000 provides 30,000 lbs. of fresh produce to be distributed to families in need

\$25,000 provides ten mobile pantries in our community serving 1,000 children

\$50,000 provides enough nutritious food to stock an in-school food pantry for an entire school year



Strategic Initiative Partners



Harry Chapin Food Bank
OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

