

>>> Perspective from a Site Supervisor

“The program was a huge help for the families we serve. We heard favorable comments from many of our parents and grandparents. Would love to offer this again next year if possible.

Also appreciated the administrative simplicity. With the load of other required paperwork we would not have been able to take it on if it were at all cumbersome. Thanks for feeding our hungry children!”

>>> Documenting the benefits of summer food programs

In the summer of 2012, the Ohio Association of Foodbanks employed a summer intern to study the effect of childhood hunger on families during the summer gap.

- ⇒ Five sites were selected from the Summer Food Service Program, who also offered the summer weekend food program. Sites represented both urban and rural areas, located throughout Ohio.
- ⇒ Data were collected at each of the five sites by interviewing parents and children who participated in the programs. Children made drawings on paper plates about what the food meant to the child and his/her family (some of these have been included in the report.) A survey of parents was also used. A total of 110 household surveys were included in the analyses.
- ⇒ Data were analyzed to identify themes and unique issues regarding food insecurity and the impact of the programs on the families.



Do summer food programs make a difference to Ohio families?



>>> Documenting the benefits of summer food programs

Background: The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is designed to make sure that children who receive free and reduced-price meals during the school year have access to nutritious meals when school is not in session. Federally, the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service administers the program. Money funnels to the Ohio Department of Education, who in turn reimburses approved sponsors for providing free meals to groups of children at centralized sites. The Ohio Association of Foodbanks assists SFSP sites as part of its larger mission to provide food and resources to people in need. The association also advocates for Ohio's most vulnerable populations and has been working with the Kasich administration to address the nutrition needs in Ohio.

In the summer of 2012, Ohio Governor John Kasich's Executive Order 2012-08K directed an additional \$1 million to The Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives for the Ohio Association of Foodbanks to fund a **Summer Weekend Meals Program** through 31 selected SFSP sponsors at 265 open sites across Ohio. The weekend program served over 10,000 children at risk of hunger each week.

Project Overview: The Ohio Association of Foodbanks wanted to gain feedback from families and children regarding food insecurity and the impact of these two

programs on the household. Please see the last page for a more detailed description of the project. The map below shows the five sites selected for the project.

Project Findings: Parents and children reported positive effects of the programs for the child participants and the household. Two key themes include the following:

1. Increasing a child's food security positively impacts the entire household.
2. Food programs help Ohio families cope with summer food insecurity and access more nutritious food.



Credits

Intern, David Pickering, worked for the Ohio Association of Foodbanks in the summer 2012 to finalize the data collection tools, gather the data, and clean and analyze it. Ohio University's Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs offered research guidance and prepared this report.



The **Ohio Association of Foodbanks** is the state's largest charitable response to hunger and represents 12 Feeding America foodbanks that distribute food and other necessities to over 3,300 charities statewide. It also operates ShareCorps, which places AmeriCorps VISTA members and VISTA Summer Associates at Ohio organizations to create and expand programs that aid in poverty alleviation.

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1. Increasing a child's food security positively impacts the entire household.

>>> The project asked families about food security, including food-related coping strategies.

Many parents reported they sacrifice their own food security to ensure their child's food security. Parents made comments such as, "I personally [skip] meals, but not my children. I make sure they eat." When pressed on why they skip meals, parents said, "To make sure [the children] had enough." Another parent said, "Oh yeah, I [skip] all the time just to make sure my kids have food."

Most parents who said they had skipped or reduced the size of meals prior to the program, noted increased food security during participation. When asked if any household members were skipping meals during program participation the majority of parents said no.

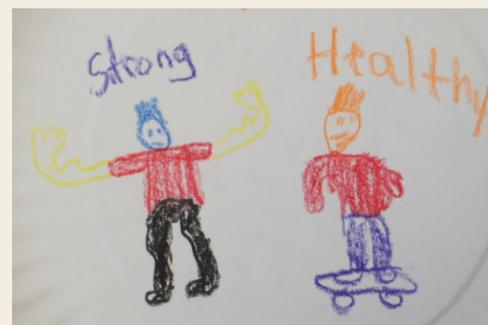
In a couple of cases, parents observed that although the programs help, some food insecurity still exists. One parent said, "[My kids] are not skipping as much. They're getting more [food] because of the program." Another parent said that prior to the program they had to skip meals or cut portions "just so it would be enough for all of us." One parent noted the program provided some aid, yet, "The only time they eat breakfast now is when they get the backpack meal [on the weekend]."

>>> The project asked families what they would be doing over the summer without the programs.

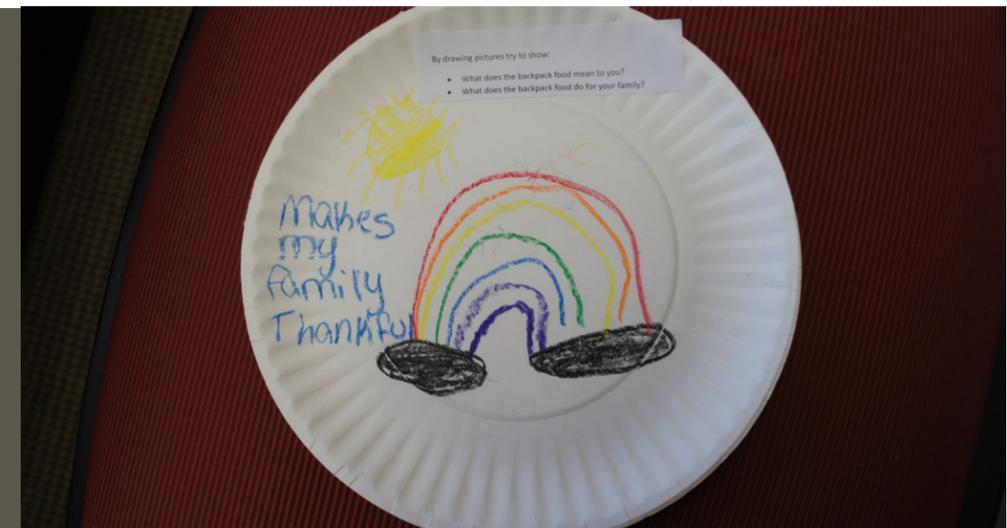
Parents mentioned they would have tried to cope in a variety of ways. Many said they would have had to switch to cheaper foods (like generic brands) or less healthy options (like bologna or macaroni). Parents also said they would have had to borrow food, stretched meals further, found a community meal program and/or forgone paying other bills. As one parent said, "...I would have to take it out of bill money to buy extra food, which makes us behind..." Another parent said, "Probably scrounging to tell you the truth."

>>> The project asked families about accessing food during the summer.

Parents said accessing food during the summer was harder than the school year, but noted that having the on-site meals and backpacks available made it easier this summer.



A little more than 40 percent of surveyed families said the program food often or always made other meals better.



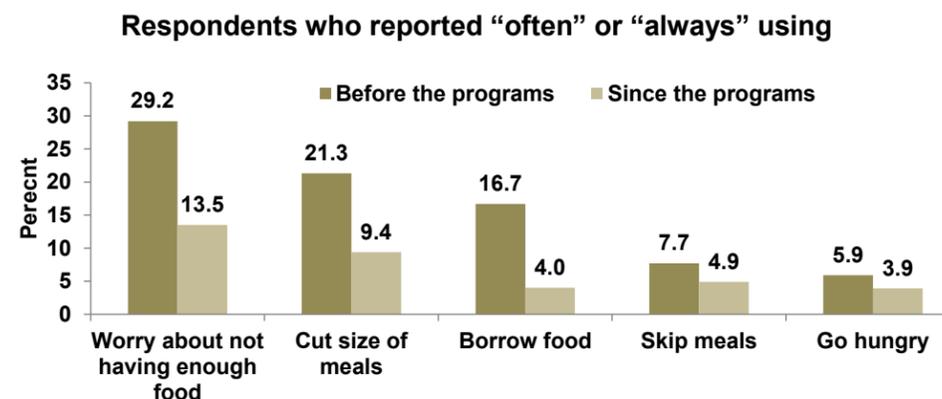
>>> Impact on the Family

2. Food programs help Ohio families cope with summer food insecurity and access

Parents reported needing to use less food-related coping strategies when they received the summer food (see figure below). More specifically, those who reported "often" or "always" worrying about not having enough food dropped from 29 percent before the program to 14 percent since being in the program; needing to cut the size of meals dropped from 21 percent to 9 percent; borrowing food dropped from 17 percent to 4 percent; skipping meals dropped from 8 percent to 5 percent; and going hungry dropped from 6 percent to 4 percent. In a paired samples t-test analysis (see notes below), all of the coping strategies showed statistically significant decreases.

⇒ Parents said the programs helped them stretch their food budget further, especially near the end of the month. They also stated they had money to cover other bills because of the programs.

⇒ Parents mentioned the nutritional quality of the food, saying it was more nutritious than what the family could afford (e.g., canned tuna versus hot dogs). One parent said, "[The program] tries to put healthy snacks in the [backpacks], like raisins and sunflower seeds. Stuff [the kids] hadn't tried before but now they will like... It isn't like there's a bunch of junk." Another parent said, "[without the program the kids] would probably be getting a donut on Sunday morning instead of raisins and stuff that's good for them."



Notes: On the survey, midway through the programs, parents were asked to think back to before the programs began and rate the use of five food-related coping strategies. The next question then asked them to use the same scale to rate the use of the coping strategies since being in the programs. Ideally a paired samples t-test would be conducted using pre and post test data at different points in time, but the results of this analysis still show positive significance.