

Across the world each day, 815 million people experience hunger; lack of nutrition is an indicator in more than 3.1 million child deaths annually around the globe (World Hunger, 2018). In the United States, over 37 million people (11.5% of individuals) qualified as food insecure in 2018 (Feeding America, 2020e).

Food insecurity refers to a “household’s inability to provide enough food for every person to live an active, healthy life...underlying causes [include] poverty, unemployment/ under-employment and inconsistent access to enough healthy food” (Feeding America, 2020g).

The following chart shows the food insecurity rates for the United States, Texas and the Kronkosky counties of interest in 2018:

	Food Insecurity Rate	Food Insecure People
<b>United States</b>	11.5%	37,227,000
<b>Texas</b>	15.0%	4,295,240
<b>Bandera</b>	15.6%	3,390
<b>Bexar</b>	14.1%	271,790
<b>Comal</b>	12.2%	16,480
<b>Kendall</b>	11.2%	4,720

(Feeding America, 2020b)

Food insecurity is not necessarily tied to income. In fact, “as of 2018, one in three (32%) food-insecure individuals who reported income lived in households unlikely to qualify for most federal food assistance” (Feeding America, 2020e, p7).

Increased costs for food, transportation, housing, health care, and energy are forcing many Americans to choose between food and other necessities. Food banks are important resources that provide both short-term and

long-term assistance to those needing food across the country.

**FOOD BANKS**

Food banks are charitable, nonprofit organizations that solicit, receive, inventory, and store donated food until it is distributed to charitable agencies that provide groceries and meals to people in need in their service areas (Feeding America, 2020f).

Feeding America represents the United States national food bank network. This organization provides emergency food assistance to more than 46 million Americans annually. Those clients include over 12 million children and 7 million senior citizens (Feeding America, 2020h). Feeding America provides food and monetary resources to its member agencies throughout the country, which in turn allocate those resources to agencies that directly help the hungry.

Agencies which ultimately distribute the various food products operate emergency food programs (programs that provide short-term or emergency assistance including food pantries, soup kitchens, or shelters) and/or non-emergency programs (day and summer camps, senior congregate meals, and various other programs) (Feeding America, 2020f).

In the *Hunger in America 2014* survey, Feeding America (2014a) acquired statistical information about agencies that operated emergency food programs. “It was the largest study of its kind, providing a profound understanding of the personal and economic circumstances of the households served by the Feeding America network and partner agencies. The data

collected through the Hunger in America series continues to help guide program development that seeks to improve food security for individuals and their households. It is also used to inform public policy and support for solving hunger in America” (Feeding America, 2020c). Agency data from this survey appears in the following table.

CHARACTERISTICS OF FOOD BANK AGENCIES		
	United States	Texas
Unduplicated clients served per year	46,500,000	3,513,000
Number of member agencies who received food bank products <sup>†</sup>	46,000	3,802
PERCENTAGE OF AGENCIES WITH:		
Emergency food programs	54%	55%
Pantry	71%	73%
Soup kitchen	18%	16%
Shelter	11%	11%
<sup>†</sup> includes only agencies who responded to the survey		
(Feeding America, 2014a&b)		

**CLIENTS OF FOOD BANKS**

The *Hunger in America 2014* survey also gathered information about the clients who utilized food bank services. The tables below present demographic and other pertinent characteristics of emergency food bank clients in the United States and Texas.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF CLIENTS USING EMERGENCY FOOD PROGRAMS		
	United States	Texas
<b>Age (years)</b>		
0-17	28.5%	29.8%
18-64	60.3%	52.2%
65+	11.2%	12.8%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	33.3%	31%
Female	66.7%	69%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White	43%	29%
Black	26%	24.4%
Hispanic	20%	41.3%
Other	11%	5.3%
(Feeding America, 2014a&b)		

CHARACTERISTICS OF FOOD BANK CLIENTS		
	United States	Texas
Food insecure	83.8%	84%
Homeless	10%	10%
At least on employed member within household	54%	54%
At least one household member in poor health	23.9%	26%
(Feeding America, 2014a&b)		

The people who utilize food bank services often also access other government programs designed to help ease hunger, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program- (SNAP) (previously called Food Stamp program). In 2020 the average monthly benefit for an individual is \$136.36 and for a household is \$266.86 (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2020). In 2017, 16% of Americans eligible for food stamp benefits did not receive those benefits (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2019). The following table provides statistics showing the use of various government food assistance programs by food bank clients.

PARTICIPATION OF FOOD BANK CLIENTS IN GOVERNMENT FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS		
	United States	Texas
Food stamps (SNAP)	55%	49%
Women, Infants, Children (WIC)	24%	61%
School lunch	94%	72%
School breakfast	46%	50%
(Feeding America, 2014a&b)		

**FOOD BANKS SERVING TEXAS**

Twenty-one food banks are members of the Texas Food Bank Network and service the state of Texas. Together, Texas food banks distribute over 300 million pounds of food annually to local communities through over 3,000 partner agencies. The table at the end of this document provides general information about the various Texas food banks serving all 254 counties in Texas (Feeding Texas, n.d.).

**SAN ANTONIO FOOD BANK**

The San Antonio Food Bank (2017) serves over 500 agencies in 16 Texas counties, including Bandera, Bexar, Comal, and Kendall Counties, reaching over 58,000 individuals per week. It

manages a variety of in-house programs, collaborative programs, and programs that directly support its member agencies. Current food bank programs include:

#### *Benefits Assistance*

Educates and assists people through the application process for a variety of federal benefits including:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Adult Medicaid
- Medicaid Long-Term Care
- CHIP (Children's Medicaid)
- Women, Infants & Children (WIC)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Healthy Texas Women

#### *Farmers' Market*

Offered at a variety of locations on various days and times, these markets provide access to a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, many of which are grown at the SA Food Bank farm, to communities where produce may not otherwise be readily available.

#### *Food Assistance and Distribution*

The SA Food Bank warehouse "receives over one million pounds of product each week. Once received, the food is weighed, inventoried, and then made available to various programs and partner agencies" (San Antonio Food Bank, 2017). Partner agencies then provide the food directly to the people served in their programs.

- Mobile Pantry program. SA Food Bank brings its Mobile Pantry truck, filled with a variety of produce, frozen, and refrigerated products to a partner agency location. Each vehicle can provide 200 families with up to 50 pounds of food.
- Food Fair. Typically lasting about three hours, food fairs connect individuals to other SA Food Bank programs (Benefits Assistance, Nutrition, Health and Wellness Education, etc.) in addition to distributing food products to partner agency pre-qualified individuals.

#### *Mobile Mercado*

Offering quality produce at affordable prices, the Mobile Mercado serves as a mobile mini grocery store, farmers' market, demonstration kitchen and teaching tool that improves access to healthy affordable foods such as locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables and brings nutrition education to residents in food desert areas.

#### *Nutrition, Health and Wellness*

- Education Programs that offer a variety of classes throughout its service area on nutrition, food safety, food budgeting, obesity, and diabetes. These programs are free to nonprofit agencies.
- Summer Camp for school age children. Offered in June and July, with two curricula, camps are 1-2 weeks in duration and available at no cost to participants.

#### *Programs for Children*

- Back Pack Program provides children at-risk of hunger with food to take home throughout the school year.
- Summer Food Service Program provides free meals and/or snacks to at-risk kids during the summer months at local community centers, schools, churches, and other nonprofits.
- Kids Café program, in partnership with nonprofit agencies that have established youth programs, provides after-school meals and enrichment activities to at-risk youth.

#### *Programs for Seniors*

- Project HOPE provides seniors living on a fixed income with supplemental groceries on a monthly basis. Food is chosen to accommodate the special dietary needs of seniors and is distributed through over 70 sites in the San Antonio area.
- Seniors Farmers Market provides low-income seniors with fresh produce distributed through existing senior program sites.

#### *Programs for Pets*

- DaisyCares Pet Food Program provides pet food to clients

- PAWEdu “is an innovative online rehabilitation education program for individuals cited for animal neglect cases. This education program supports responsible pet ownership and fosters human-animal connection. PAWEdu is mandated by local courts who oversee animal neglect cases” (San Antonio Food Bank, 2017).

#### *Job Assistance*

- Culinary Training Program provides 18-week course to an average of 50 graduates per year in preparation for food service industry employment.
- Texas Second Chance Program provides work and training opportunities at the food bank for inmates incarcerated at Dominguez State Jail.
- Job Assistance provides client development, case management, and various job readiness training for SA Food Bank clients (San Antonio Food Bank, 2017)

#### **FOOD INSECURITY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

National response to the COVID-19 pandemic included widespread closures and stay-at-home orders. As a result, unemployment has soared and demand for assistance from food banks has significantly increased.

A report from Feeding America estimates that the “number of people experiencing food insecurity in 2020 would increase by over 17 million, including nearly 7 million children. This implies that approximately 54 million people (1 in 6) would experience food insecurity in 2020, including 18 million children (1 in 4)” (Feeding America (2020d, p2). The projected rate of food

insecurity in Texas by Feeding America (2020h) is 20.2% ranking the state at number seven for the highest rate in the nation.

Feeding Texas (2020) reported unprecedented demand for assistance from food banks resulting from the pandemic. Food banks across the state are facing extraordinary challenges including:

- Scarcity of volunteers due to stay-at-home recommendations
- Decline in food donations as grocers face dwindling supplies
- Inability to purchase staple items, grocers can’t fill bulk orders

“If this were a normal natural disaster like Hurricane Harvey, there’s automatically a fire hose of resources that flow to our food banks during that time,” said Jamie Olson, director of government affairs for the food bank network Feeding Texas, which serves 4.5 million Texans annually. But because of the pandemic, “instead of that fire hose, we’re drinking from a water fountain” (Feeding Texas, 2020).

The San Antonio Food Bank is providing drive-thru and walk-up food distribution at Camargo Park Tuesday through Saturday as well as home delivery for elderly and homebound individuals. Meals for Kids are distributed at 13 locations around San Antonio (San Antonio Food Bank, 2017).

“The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a public health and economic crisis, the effects of which are widespread. The repercussions will include added hardship for already vulnerable populations as well as a significant increase in the number of people experiencing food insecurity” (Feeding America, 2020d, p13).

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FOOD BANKS IN TEXAS (AS OF JULY 2020)			
Location	Food Bank*	# of Counties served	Number of Partner Agencies
Abilene	Food Bank of West Central Texas	13	150
Amarillo	High Plains Food Bank	29	185
Austin	Central Texas Food Bank, Inc.	21	250
Beaumont	Southeast Texas Food Bank	8	130
Corpus Christi	Food Bank of Corpus Christi	11	144
Dallas	North Texas Food Bank	13	200
Ft. Worth	Tarrant Area Food Bank	13	270
Houston	Houston Food Bank	18	600
Bryan	Brazos Valley Food Bank	6	38
Conroe	Montgomery County Food Bank	1	51
Texas City	Galveston County Food Bank	1	55
El Paso	El Pasoans Fighting Hunger Food Bank	3	123
Laredo	South Texas Food Bank	8	60
Lubbock	South Plains Food Bank	20	220
San Angelo	Concho Valley Regional Food Bank	13	Not listed
Pharr	Food Bank of the Rio Grande Valley, Inc.	3	275
Odessa	West Texas Food Bank	19	70
<b>San Antonio</b>	<b>San Antonio Food Bank</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>500</b>
Tyler	East Texas Food Bank	26	200
Victoria	Food Bank of the Golden Crescent	11	100
Wichita Falls	Wichita Falls Area Food Bank	12	200

(Feeding America, 2020a; Feeding Texas, n.d.)

