

Nevada Council on Food Security

2021 Annual Report



**Nevada Department of
Health and Human Services**

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BACKGROUND

In 2012, the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Grants Management Unit (GMU) conducted a Community Needs Assessment. The assessment identified food insecurity as a priority public health issue for Nevada. At the time, one (1) in six (6) Nevada households were food insecure. In 2013, the GMU implemented a strategic planning process to address food insecurity in Nevada. Four (4) workgroups were created to address specific components of food insecurity: LEAD, FEED, GROW, and REACH. Goals and activities were developed under each component, comprising the 2013 *Food Security in Nevada: Nevada's Plan for Action* (i.e. the Food Security Plan). Following the completion of the Food Security Plan, Governor Brian Sandoval issued Executive Order 2014-03 on February 12, 2014, establishing the CFS to implement the goals of the Food Security Plan and effectively improve the quality of life and health of Nevadans by increasing food security throughout the State. In 2017, the CFS updated the Food Security Plan. The updated themes and objectives are:

LEAD

Goal 1: Align and enhance collaboration efforts of state and non-state agencies to strengthen statewide food security strategies.

Goal 2: Identify and support state and local policies that increase food security in Nevada.

FEED

Goal 1: Support strategies that increase participation in state/federal nutrition programs.

Goal 2: Support client-centered strategies that increase access to nutrition programs and resources that address determinants of hunger.

GROW

Goal 1: Support initiatives to strengthen Nevada's food system and increase access to local foods.

DATA

Goal 1: Establish evaluation and reporting processes to enhance data collection to drive future strategies and track progress in improving food security in Nevada.

The CFS was codified in the 80th Nevada Legislative Session, per Nevada Revised Statute (NRS) 232.4963, which also created the DHHS Food For People, Not Landfills Program (FFPNL) to increase food security through food waste reduction. Since its inception, the CFS has provided a platform for stakeholders and subject-matter experts to make recommendations to state agencies on addressing food insecurity in Nevada and has enhanced connectivity among food security initiatives and partners. Over the past seven (7) years, the CFS has aimed to fight hunger among Nevada's most vulnerable populations, including children and older Nevadans.

This report provides data on the current state of food insecurity in Nevada, including the impact of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) on Nevada food insecurity, the accomplishments of the CFS throughout 2021, and the future focus of the CFS for 2022.

FOOD INSECURITY IN NEVADA

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as households that are uncertain they will have, or be able to acquire, enough food to meet the needs of household members due to insufficient resources for food. Food insecurity is a significant public health concern associated with adverse health outcomes and a poor quality of life, including chronic diseases and mental health issues.^{1,2} In addition, food insecure individuals often lack access to nutrition-dense foods, limiting their ability to maintain healthy eating behaviors and manage their chronic disease(s). While food insecurity may be harmful to individuals of all ages, it can be especially devastating to children and older adults. Food insecure children are more likely to repeat a grade in elementary school, experience developmental impairments in areas like language and motor skills and have more social and behavioral problems.³

The older adult population faces unique food security challenges compared to other age groups. Older Nevadans living at home are at an increased risk of hunger due to poor health conditions; lack of reliable social support and transportation; low fixed incomes; and disability or functional limitations which impact their ability to obtain or prepare food. Having a lower income is a known cause of food insecurity that impacts older adults who have limited financial resources available for purchasing food; often, money goes toward cheaper and less nutritious foods so other necessary bills can be paid, such as housing costs, utilities, and prescriptions.⁴

Food Insecurity in Nevada: Pre-COVID 19

Since the end of the Great Recession, Nevada has made significant strides in addressing food insecurity. Through the development of *Food Security in Nevada: Nevada's Plan for Action* in 2013, the creation of the Office of Food Security (OFS) within Nevada DHHS, the creation of the CFS via Executive Order, and codifying the CFS into state law in the 80th Legislative Session in 2019, Nevada has demonstrated its dedication to providing a platform for enhancing collaborative efforts throughout the food security network and implementing policies supporting food security statewide. In 2016, Nevada was one (1) of 16 states to experience a significant decrease in food insecurity; however, from 2016-2019, one (1) in eight (8) Nevadans remained food insecure.^{5,6} Nationally, in 2018, the prevalence of household food insecurity declined for the first time to the pre-recession (2007) level of 11.1%.⁷

¹ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/84467/err-235.pdf?v=42942>

² <https://academic.oup.com/jn/article/145/3/622/4743717>

³ <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/child-hunger-facts>

⁴ Nevada Office of Food Security, Nutrition Programs for Older Nevadans and Preliminary Recommendations, 2018

⁵ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/84973/err-237.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/99282/err-275.pdf?v=5988.4>

⁷ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/94849/err-270.pdf?v=1893.2>

Food Insecurity in Nevada: Post-COVID 19

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) reversed Nevada's progress in addressing hunger and completely changed the landscape of food insecurity in Nevada. At the height of the pandemic, food security partners statewide saw an unprecedented increase in need for food and nutrition services, due to high unemployment rates, limited access to resources, and social distancing guidelines. Nevada food security partners worked tirelessly to meet the need, constantly adjusting programs, navigating new challenges and federal guidance, and implementing new procedures and embarking on new partnerships. Federal flexibilities, waivers, and funding supported overcoming barriers due to COVID-19 and implementation of new innovative projects and collaborations.

Despite collective efforts, Feeding America data show Nevada ranked as eighth nationally among states with the highest projected overall food insecurity rates in 2021 at 15.2%, compared to 2020 projections (17.1%) and 2019 actuals (12.1%), with an overall projected 24.8% increase between 2019 and 2021. Similarly, Nevada is ranked eight nationally among states with the highest projected very low food insecurity rates in 2021 (6.2%) compared to 2020 projections (7.2%) and 2019 actuals (4.8%), with an overall projected 29.2% increase between 2019 and 2021.

The same report ranks Nevada as fifth nationally among states with the highest projected child food insecurity rates in 2021 (23%) compared to 2020 (26.7%) projections and 2019 actuals (17.7%), with an overall projected 30% increase between 2019 and 2021. Nevada is ranked second nationally among states with the highest projected rates of children in very low food insecurity rates in 2021 (8.1%) compared to 2020 (9.3%) projections and 2019 (6.3%) actuals, with an overall projected increase of 28.6% between 2019 and 2021.

Food Security Report Series

To assess the impact of COVID-19 on food insecurity in Nevada and track the incredible response efforts of Nevada's food security network, the OFS collaborated with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Foundation to develop a food security report series. There are two (2) reports included within the series:

- *Combatting the Statewide Hunger Crisis*
- *Hunger Among Older Nevadans Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic*

The series provides a comprehensive summary of COVID-19 response efforts and service data from select food security partners. The reports summarize all waivers and rule flexibilities implemented for federal nutrition programs and include data and information on federal nutrition programs and food bank distributions. The series of reports can be found on the [OFS website](#). Report findings will be used to assess statewide food insecurity response efforts to identify best practices and service opportunity gaps and inform future initiatives and priorities.

NEVADA CFS: 2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The CFS met four (4) times throughout 2021. A summary of accomplishments and focus areas are outlined below.

Policy Subcommittee

During the July 17, 2019 CFS meeting, the CFS Policy Subcommittee was reestablished. The CFS Policy Subcommittee is tasked with researching, assessing, and developing a menu of policy recommendations related to food insecurity in Nevada. The Subcommittee was comprised of members from the public sector and the private non-profit sector, including representatives of the Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA), Food Bank of Northern Nevada (FBNN), Three Square Food Bank, Catholic Charities of Southern Nevada (CCSN), and Helping Hands of Vegas Valley (HHOVV). The Policy Subcommittee met six (6) times between October 2019 and September 2020 to discuss and identify State and Administrative policy recommendations. At the October 6, 2020 CFS meeting, the Policy Subcommittee presented three (3) policy recommendations for the consideration of the full Council, all of which would require action by the Nevada Legislature:

1. Establish a State Food Purchasing Program.
2. Remove requirements restricting individuals committed of a drug felony within the past 20 years from receiving the benefits of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
3. Increase home-delivered meal (HDM) program reimbursement.

The CFS voted in support of these three (3) policies as effective strategies for addressing food insecurity in Nevada. An Executive Summary of each policy and influencing factors considered while developing the State Legislative policy recommendations can be found [here](#).

Throughout the 2021 Nevada Legislative Session, three (3) food security-related policies were passed, including two (2) of the CFS's recommended policies: [Senate Bill \(SB\) 370](#), [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 138](#), and [SB 297](#).

SB370: SB 370 created the Home Feeds Nevada Agriculture Food Purchase Program, which aims to supplement the supply of nutritious foods available to persons through food banks or certain other providers in Nevada. To support this program, SB370 also created the Nutritious Food Purchase Account, allowing the Director of the Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA) to solicit and accept any gift, grant, or donation for the program. SB370 requires the Director of NDA to submit a written report to the CFS on September 30th of each year regarding the immediately preceding fiscal year, including 1) all expenditures from the Nutritious Food Purchase Account; 2) the number of people and households served by program; and 3) the variety, supply, and cost of purchases made.

AB 138: AB 138 revised provisions relating to the eligibility of certain convicted persons for public assistance. Under AB 138, a person who has been convicted of a felony may now receive SNAP and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TANF).

SB 297: SB 297 revised provisions related to a plan to inventory vacant and blighted lands in a master plan and required the CFS to research and provide recommendations on community gardens and urban farms.

NRS 232.496 Review

At the August 2021 CFS meeting, the CFS reviewed the duties of the CFS under NRS 232.4963, which was enacted in the 2019 Nevada Legislative Session. Under NRS 232.4963, the CFS shall:

1. Develop, coordinate, and implement a food system that will: Partner with initiatives in economic development and social determinants of health; Increase access to improved food resource programs; Increase participation in federal nutrition programs by eligible households; and Increase capacity to produce, process, distribute and purchase food in an affordable and sustainable manner.
2. Hold public hearings to receive public comment and to discuss issues related to food security in this State.
3. Serve as a clearinghouse for the review and approval of any events or projects initiated in the name of the Plan.
4. Review and comment on any proposed federal, state, or local legislation and regulation that would affect the food policy system of this State.
5. Advise and inform the Governor on the food policy of this State.
6. Review grant proposals and alternative funding sources as requested by the Director to provide recommendations for funding the Plan.
7. Develop new resources related to the Plan.
8. Advise, assist and make recommendations to the Director for the creation and administration of the Program.

The DHHS Deputy Attorney General presented to the CFS, summarizing the CFS's duties, Open Meeting Law requirements, and how the CFS may engage in supporting policy and making policy recommendations under the new NRS. The presentation can be found [here](#).

Food Security Plan Revision

At the April 6, 2021 CFS meeting, the OFS announced the beginning of a strategic planning process to update and revise the *2018 Food Security Plan: Nevada's Plan for Action*. The OFS contracted with the Blueprint Collaborative to manage, facilitate, and coordinate the strategic planning process. At the August 2, 2021 CFS meeting, the Blueprint Collaborative presented the strategic planning overview to members. The one-pager presented be found [here](#). In August 2021, CFS members recommended Working Group participants. The working group will meet on a monthly basis between September 2021 and June 2022 to guide and inform the strategic planning process.

To review the progress and current status of the 2018 Food Security plan, an assessment was conducted via two (2) review meetings: 1) a special meeting on October 11, 2021 with a group comprised of workgroup members and CFS members and 2) via the November 2, 2021 CFS meeting.

INCLUDE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND LINK FINAL PROGRESS SUMMARY HERE.

American Rescue Plan Recommendations

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FUTURE FOCUS

Throughout 2022, the CFS will continue to bring together statewide, cross-sector partners to align efforts, enhance collaboration, and strategize how best to address food insecurity throughout - and in the aftermath of - the COVID-19 pandemic. The CFS will work to better inform food security policy in the State and make recommendations for future federal funding. In addition, the CFS will continue to be engaged in and inform the food security strategic planning process.

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