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## SACRAMENTO HUNGER COALITION

# Food Security Initiative

### Opening the Cupboard *Hunger in Sacramento County*

*The first freedom of man, I contend, is the freedom to eat.*

Eleanor Roosevelt

*Mankind has never before had such ample technical and financial resources for coping with hunger and poverty. The immense task can be tackled once the necessary collective will is mobilized. What is necessary can be done, and must be done.*

The Brandt  
Commission, 1980

Hunger and food insecurity<sup>1</sup> exist at unacceptable levels in Sacramento County. They are a direct result of poverty that afflicts both the unemployed and the working poor<sup>2</sup>. With 166,431 (12.8%) of our fellow residents and 67,539 (19.1%) of our children living in poverty, it is not difficult to begin understanding the dimensions of hunger in our area.<sup>3</sup>

In Sacramento County:

- 71,000 low income adults are food insecure<sup>4</sup>
- 22,000 low income adults experience episodes of hunger<sup>5</sup>
- 64,511 eligible school-age children do not receive a free or reduced-price breakfast<sup>6</sup>
- 95,899 of those eligible do not receive food stamps<sup>7</sup>

Hunger and food insecurity place daily health<sup>8</sup> burdens on our fellow residents and on our community resources:

- 61% of those who are food insecure in Sacramento County report that they have experienced 5 or more days of poor health in the past month. This rate is nearly double the reported rate of those with food security.<sup>9</sup>
- 33% of 7<sup>th</sup> graders score outside the normal body mass index (an obesity indicator)<sup>10</sup>
- The odds of a child being hospitalized after birth are almost a third larger for food-insecure children than food-secure children.<sup>11</sup>

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**Filling the Cupboard**  
*First Steps*

**Major activities of  
the Sacramento  
Hunger Commission  
1989-2007:**

- **Public Education**
- **Outreach**
- **Advocacy**

In response to the challenges posed by hunger and food insecurity, the Community Services Planning Council (CSPC) created the Sacramento Hunger Commission in 1989. Funded in large part by the City and County of Sacramento, the Commission is comprised of a small staff and diverse community members. The Commission focuses on public education, outreach, and advocacy. Recent accomplishments include:

Public Education

- *Hunger Hits Home (2003)* – A study of the needs and challenges of 338 clients of area soup kitchens, food closets, and federal food assistance programs
- The annual Hope Awards honoring outstanding efforts to end hunger
- Publication of a nutrition education manual and curriculum, and classes for low-income residents
- *Breaking Barriers*, a Food Access Study of Del Paso Heights and North Sacramento
- Development of Hunger 101, an on-line interactive demonstration of being hungry and seeking food in the Sacramento Area

Outreach

- An information campaign to increase utilization of Food Stamps by senior citizens
- An information campaign to increase participation in the Summer Lunch Program
- Publication of flyers informing residents of 19 neighborhoods about emergency food providers
- Development of an edible landscaping project and nutrition education curriculum in a low-income housing complex

Advocacy

- Sponsored the “Food Charter” that was ratified by the Sacramento City Council (April 2004)
- Supported AB 231 (Steinberg), the Food Stamp Improvement bill signed into law in 2003
- Participated in the annual statewide Hunger Action Day at the State Capitol

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**Filling the Cupboard  
A Renewed Call to Action**

In November 2005, as hunger and food insecurity continued to rise in the Sacramento region, the CSPC convened a Planning Committee to rethink and offer recommendations regarding the future mission and activities of the CSPC in this area. The Planning Committee was comprised of Hunger Commission members, CSPC Board members, interested community members, professionals in the field, and CSPC staff. The charge of the Committee was to:

- Briefly review past CSPC anti-hunger activities;
- Re-think how the CSPC should best address hunger in the future;
- Present our conclusions and recommendations to the broader community for critique and refinement.

*Important Findings of the CSPC Planning Committee*

During its deliberations, the Planning Committee convened by the CSPC confronted three important but contradictory findings:

- Many are working diligently and effectively to end hunger in Sacramento
- However, a coordinated effort does not exist to help plan, implement and measure progress
- A broad based effort is needed to significantly reduce hunger and food insecurity in our area.

*Major Recommendation of the CSPC Planning Committee*

In order to address the formidable challenges posed by hunger and food insecurity, the Community Services Planning Council recommends establishing the Sacramento Hunger Coalition. This broad based coalition will be composed of community members, representatives from non-profit organizations, emergency food providers, representatives from the private sector, representatives of governmental agencies, elected officials, former Hunger Commission members, and CSPC Board members and staff.

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**IMPORTANT FINDINGS**

- Many are working on hunger issues
- A coordinated planning effort is lacking.
- A broad based approach would be beneficial

**MAJOR RECOMMENDATION**

**Establish the Sacramento Hunger Coalition**

**Setting the Table**  
***Creating the Sacramento Hunger Coalition***

**MISSION**

**...reduce hunger and malnutrition by increasing food security and access to healthy and nutritious food in Sacramento County.**

**SACRAMENTO  
HUNGER  
COALITION  
GOALS**

*Mission*

The mission of the Sacramento Hunger Coalition will be to convene and work collaboratively with members and other interested organizations to reduce hunger and malnutrition by increasing food security and access to healthy and nutritious food in Sacramento County.

*Guiding Principles*

The guiding principles of the Sacramento Hunger Coalition will be to:

- Address the needs of people and communities at risk of being hungry
- Collaborate and develop partnerships – that provide needed and non-redundant services – with individuals, neighborhoods, non-profit organizations, the private sector, government, and educational entities
- Develop partnerships that efficiently utilize local resources and maximize fundraising capabilities
- Develop strategies that are:
  - integrated, comprehensive, and systemic
  - culturally appropriate and address community or neighborhood needs
  - sustainable and designed for replication
  - innovative and based upon best practice principles
  - measurable and can be evaluated

*Goals*

The Sacramento Hunger Coalition will engage in four inter-related areas of activity:

- 1. Changing Public Policy**
- 2. Increasing Access to Healthy and Nutritious Foods**
- 3. Promoting Healthy Foods**
- 4. Increasing Public Awareness**

Following are initial goals identified by the CSPC Planning Committee. A main charge of the Sacramento Hunger Coalition will be to expand upon these goals, identify outcome measures, develop strategies, partnerships, and a long-term plan for reducing hunger and food insecurity in Sacramento County.

**Putting Food on the Table**  
*Sacramento Hunger Coalition Goals*

**Changing Public Policy**

- 1. Increase grocery store access in low-income areas**
- 2. Increase the number of school and community gardens**
- 3. Change local ordinances allowing for more edible landscaping in private residences and in public housing projects**
- 4. Integrate Sacramento Hunger Coalition public policy strategies with Sacramento City and County land use and transportation policies**

**Increasing Access to Healthy and Nutritious Foods**

- 1. Increase participation in federal food programs**
- 2. Increase access to fresh produce in low income communities**
- 3. Develop a coordinated emergency food system**

**Promoting Healthy Foods**

- 1. Increase nutrition education in low income communities and schools**
- 2. Increase the availability of healthy foods in public settings and in schools**
- 3. Increase the number of local family and urban farms that provide fresh produce and healthy foods to low-income communities and schools**
- 4. Increase the level in which the food industry promotes healthy diets**

**Increasing Public Awareness**

- 1. Convene and facilitate community efforts designed to reduce hunger and increase food security**
- 2. Serve as a central resource for information about anti-hunger, food security, and nutrition education in Sacramento County**
- 3. Educate target audiences and the broader community**

In order to sustain and guide the work of the Sacramento Hunger Coalition, the CSPC will:

- Provide staff support
- Assist with fundraising
- Serve as a fiscal agent.

**Food Security Coalition**  
*Initiative to Reduce Hunger and  
Increase Food Security*

**Food Security Coalition Planning Committee**

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Office of Human Services, City of Sacramento

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**Food Security Coalition**  
***Initiative to Reduce Hunger and***  
***Increase Food Security***

**Footnotes and Citations**

1. Food insecurity occurs when individuals and/or families are periodically uncertain when they will have access to food.
2. Working poor is defined as individuals who work or families who have individuals in them that work but are still at or below poverty level.
3. Source: “Sacramento County Nutrition Profile,” California Food Policy Advocates, 2005
4. Source: “2001R – and 2004 California Health Interview Survey,” UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, June 2005
5. Ibid
6. Source: “Sacramento County Nutrition Profile,” California Food Policy Advocates, 2005
7. Ibid
8. Health related illnesses caused by hunger and food insecurity include, but are not limited to, malnutrition, obesity, anemia, low birth weight, underweight, and stunted growth:
9. Ibid
10. 2004 California Health Interview Survey, op. cit.
11. Source: “Food Insecurity Is Associated with Adverse Health Outcomes among Human Infants and Toddlers.” John T. Cook. The American Society for Nutritional Sciences. June 2004.