



The State of Senior Hunger in Ohio

“Hunger is a disease. And it is 100% curable.”

This statement from Enid Borden resonated with participants at a day dedicated to bringing attention to the problem of senior hunger. Borden is the President and CEO of the [National Foundation to End Senior Hunger](#) and was the [keynote speaker](#) at the [Area Office on Aging of Northwestern Ohio's](#) (AOoA) annual Legislative Breakfast held on April 28.

Nationally, food insecurity among those 60 and older has increased.

“It’s easier to go a day without medication than go a day without eating,” explained one of the older adults featured in AOoA’s video [“Silent Hunger.”](#)

Hunger is in and of itself a serious problem, but it also leads to poor health outcomes, especially for seniors who have to choose between medication and food. The Ohio Association of Foodbanks’ report, [The Cost of Senior Hunger](#), describes the impact of hunger on health outcomes. **Food insecure elderly persons have been found to be 2.33 times more likely to report fair or poor health status.** Food insecurity among elders increases disability, decreases resistance to infection, and extends hospital stays, and [disability](#) in and of itself also affects food security. Many medications need to be taken with food to assure their effectiveness. Too many seniors skip meals in order to purchase medication, only to see the “take with food” label on the prescription bottle.

There are a number of efforts underway to address senior hunger: national advocacy such as from the National Foundation to End Senior Hunger and AARP; and Ohio Association of Foodbanks at the state level. Local efforts, such as AOoA’s, work toward lessening and eliminating hunger.

Senior Hunger by the Numbers

Nationally

8.4 % of adults over 65 were food insecure in 2011.

More than 1 in 7 seniors faced the threat of hunger in 2010.

From 2001 to 2010, the number of seniors experiencing the threat of hunger **increased by 78%.**

Since the onset of the recession from 2007 to 2010, the number of seniors experiencing the threat of hunger has **increased by 34%.**

In Ohio

As of 2010, nearly **16%** of older Ohioans are at risk of hunger.

Ohio ranks 10th in the nation for seniors 50-59 suffering from food insecurity— that means **over 10%** of seniors in that age range are food insecure.

19.5% of all Ohioans over the age of 50 with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level are food insecure.

Sources: US Department of Agriculture [report](#), Meals on Wheels Research Foundation [study](#)



Federal programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, or “food assistance” in Ohio), Meals on Wheels and other Older Americans Act programs, and the Senior Farmers’ Market Program are critical to addressing senior hunger. **SNAP in particular is underutilized.** In Ohio, in 2010, 7% of all individuals who participate in SNAP were over the age of 60. The average SNAP benefit for older Americans living alone is \$119 a month. The [Ohio Benefit Bank](#), [Toledo Area Ministries](#), and [Ohio District 5 Area Agency on Aging](#) all participate in Ohio’s SNAP Outreach Plan, and emphasize SNAP participation for older Ohioans.

Hunger is a global issue, yet the causes of hunger cannot be easily addressed at the macro level. Communities across Ohio are combating the problem in innovative ways. Food policy councils and hunger coalitions are bringing people together, and community gardens, SNAP outreach, backpack programs, and SNAP farmers’ market incentive programs, such as Cuyahoga County’s [“Produce Perks.”](#) are also making a difference.

Partners in this process include:

- human services agencies and advocates
- faith-based organizations
- health providers
- agriculture, county, and city governments
- charitable foundations.

For more information, contact o4a’s Beth Kowalczyk, Kowalczyk@ohioaging.org.

About the Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging | o4a

The Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging (o4a), a nonprofit organization, is a statewide network of agencies that provide services for older adults, their families and caregivers, as well as advocate on their behalf. The Association addresses issues that have an impact on the aging network, provides services to members, and serves as a collective voice for Ohio’s Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs). Equal Opportunity Employer/Provider. For more information visit, www.ohioaging.org.
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Senior Hunger Resource Guide

Advocacy

[Ohio Association of Foodbanks](#)
[National Foundation to End Senior Hunger](#)
[AARP Foundation](#)
[Feeding America](#)
[National Meals on Wheels Association](#)
[Food Research Action Center’s Smart Choices in Hard Times](#)

Government and Other Programs

Older Americans Act Nutrition Programs:

- [Administration on Aging](#)
- [Ohio Dept. of Aging](#)

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program:

- [USDA’s SNAP](#)
- Ohio Department of Job and Family Services’ [Food Assistance](#)

Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program:

- [USDA](#)
- [Ohio Dept. of Aging](#)

Fact Sheet: Food Programs, Foodbanks, The Emergency Food Assistance Program, and Commodity Supplemental Food Program

[Ohio Family Nutrition Program](#), a free education program serving low-income Ohioans

[Ohio Benefit Bank](#)