

# TALKING POINTS: FOOD ASSISTANCE & HUNGER IN THE HEARTLAND 2021

This is an unprecedented study of the Kansas Food Bank and its pantry partners. It is a comprehensive look at our neighbors who face food insecurity and the pantries that serve them.

- Kansas Food Bank worked with the University of Missouri's Interdisciplinary Center for Food Security to examine the impacts of hunger and the difficult choices many people face to make ends meet.
- This study illustrates the critical role the Kansas Food Bank and pantries play in supplying food to struggling families. (47% of households served get at least half of their monthly food from a food pantry).
- Kansas Food Bank pantries serve over 945,000 people annually.
- The working poor make up half of the people served by food pantries.
- Hunger is linked to a series of health problems, including diabetes, hypertension, and high cholesterol.
- There are significant gaps in nutrition safety net program participation.

## KEY FINDINGS:

**Neighbors facing hunger face tough choices to make ends meet.**

- 39% of households had to choose between paying for food and medicine/medical care
- 48% had to choose between food and utilities
- 39% consumed food past its expiration date
- 33% had to choose between paying for food and housing
- 25% sold or pawned personal items to pay for food

**Hunger impacts a wide range of neighbors.**

- 50% of households have at least one working adult
- 63% of clients surveyed are white
- 37% of households have at least one adult over the age of 65
- 45% have at least one child under the age of 18
- 79% of clients surveyed have a high-school degree or higher level of education
- 14% include a military veteran

**Food insecure neighbors can face significant health issues.**

- 60% of households served purchased the least expensive food in the past 12 months, even if it wasn't the healthiest option
- 43% have a member with diabetes or pre-diabetes
- 62% have a member with high blood pressure
- 46% have a member with no health insurance of any kind

**There are significant gaps between those who are eligible for safety net programs and those who participate.**

- 82% of households served have incomes that make them eligible for SNAP, but only 41% participate
- 38% of households with children 5 and under used WIC in the previous year.
- 67% with children under 18 participate in free or reduced-price breakfast or lunch.