

# ACFB

## Curriculum for Hunger 101





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## Introduction

The Atlanta Community Food Bank (ACFB) began operating in 1979 in a small space at St. Luke's Church, and now distributes over 20 million pounds of food and grocery products each year from a 129,600 square-foot facility in N.W. Atlanta. This product is utilized by more than 700 partner nonprofits that provide food assistance to families and individuals in 38 counties in metro Atlanta and North Georgia. ACFB leads seven distinct projects that reinforce its mission to fight hunger by engaging, educating and empowering our community: Atlanta Prosperity Campaign, Atlanta's Table, Community Gardens, Hunger 101, Hunger Walk/Run, Kids In Need and Product Rescue Center.

The Atlanta Community Food Bank is a member of Feeding America, the national network of more than 200 food banks. For more information on the Food Bank, visit [www.ACFB.org](http://www.ACFB.org), and for more information on Feeding America visit [www.feedingamerica.org](http://www.feedingamerica.org).

## Guidelines

This curriculum was created to help engage, educate and empower the community to take action against hunger. These materials include learning modules, activities, facts and other resources to help define hunger, food security and poverty and to create action plans to address these inter-related issues.

Feel free to adapt each activity to your audience. This curriculum can be used with young people and adults, within schools as well as corporate and civic settings.

Students will bring their own experiences and attitudes to the table. Some may have actually experienced (or are currently experiencing) hunger, and others may have a difficult time understanding how hunger persists in the United States. It is important to hear and recognize the diversity of perspectives, which will help your students form their own opinions.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the Hunger 101 Curriculum, contact:

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# Module #1- Hunger in the U.S.

## Description of Module

In a series of discussions and activities, students will examine the role food plays within families and communities. They will define the terms **hunger**, **food security** and **poverty**, and will learn who is struggling with hunger in the United States.

## Activity #1 – The Meaning of Food

### **Description:**

A discussion of how food helps us connect with others in meaningful ways

### **Objective:**

By exploring the relationships among food, family and community, participants will develop a deeper understanding of the many different ways

**\*Appropriate for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and above- can be adapted for younger audiences.**

### **Materials:**

Smart board, white board, or flipchart with markers

### **Time:**

10 minutes

### **Activity Directions:**

- Ask the group to identify different ways that food brings people together, or is the centerpiece of an activity, function or event. For example: *Family meals, holiday celebrations, community gardens, parties, potlucks, cooking together, picnics, church dinners, etc.*
- Build on the above by asking the group to reflect on all the different ways that food plays a role in their lives. For example, food provides: *nutrition, energy, life, and is a way to express love and comfort. It also becomes a vehicle to express traditions, culture and faith.*
- Feel free to use the discussion questions below to help launch the brainstorm and guide the discussion.

**Discussion Questions**  
*(Choose 4-5 depending on time)*

1. Do we eat food for reasons beyond nutrition? What are they?
2. Do you think that we ever express love with food? How?
3. Why do we bring food to families who are grieving – or celebrating?
4. Is food ever used to comfort? How?
5. Does your family have any special recipes? If yes, what are they? Who created them? Have they been passed down over more than one generation?
6. Is food one way that we express and share our family history? Can you share an example of that from your own family?
7. Tasting the food in a different country or region is often one of the first things we do when we travel. Why is that?
8. Do you have any special memories of preparing food with someone you love, or of a meal that was particularly delicious? If so, share what made the experience stand out.
9. How did our grandparents or great grandparents access and prepare food differently from the way we do now?
10. How do you think that hunger can impact a person's sense of connection to their community?

This activity was inspired by a PBS series called *The Meaning of Food*. To learn more about this series visit: <http://www.pbs.org/opb/meaningoffood/>

## **Activity #2 – Defining hunger, food security, and poverty**

### **Description:**

An activity to clarify terms and define hunger, food security and poverty

### **Objective:**

Participants develop understanding of what the Atlanta Community Food Bank and other hunger fighting organizations mean when referring to hunger, food security and poverty. Participants will examine how these words can be interpreted in different ways and how they relate to one another.

**\*Appropriate for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and above- can be adapted for younger audiences.**

### **Materials:**

- Smart board, white board, or flipchart with markers
- Paper and pencils for group breakout session.

### **Time:**

15-20 minutes

### **Activity Directions:**

1. Provide paper and pencils to small groups.
2. Ask each group to write a definition of ***hunger, food security and poverty***.
3. Have each group share their definitions.
4. Compare the definitions for ***hunger, food security and poverty*** with *American Heritage College Dictionary* and *Merriam Webster* (see below).
5. How are the group's definitions similar to the definitions provided below? How are they different?
6. Explain how we measure poverty in the United States (see below).
7. Go over the discussion questions.

## 1) What is hunger?

While people have an idea regarding the definition of hunger, when we try to quantify or describe the experience of hunger, the definition can greatly vary. Below are some examples of different attempts to define hunger.

**The American Heritage College Dictionary's definition:** Hunger is the strong desire or need for food.

**The Merriam Webster Dictionary's definition:** Hunger is a craving or urgent need for food.

**Here are additional definitions brainstormed by graduate nutrition students:**

- A condition in which people do not get enough food to provide the nutrients (carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins, minerals and water) for fully productive and active lives
- The uneasy or painful sensation caused by lack of food; the recurrent and involuntary lack of access to food

In fact, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has also struggled to define "hunger". A panel convened by USDA recommended that the word hunger:

*"...should refer to a potential consequence of **food insecurity** that, **because of prolonged, involuntary lack of food, results in discomfort, illness, weakness, or pain that goes beyond the usual uneasy sensation.**"*

The USDA stated that while this is how they would define hunger, that because there is no good way to measure that definition, they would instead create measurable "**food security**" categories.

## What is Food Security?

The USDA panel referenced above recommended that USDA make a clear and explicit distinction between **food insecurity** and **hunger**.

- **Food insecurity**—the condition assessed in the food security survey is a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food
- **Hunger**—an individual-level physiological condition that may result from food insecurity

The USDA defines food security for a family as:

Access by all members at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food security includes at a minimum **(1)** the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and **(2)** an assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (that is, without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies).

The food security status of each household lies somewhere along a continuum extending from **high food security** to **very low food security**. This continuum is divided into four ranges, characterized as follows:

1. **High food security**—Households had no problems, or anxiety about consistently accessing adequate food.
2. **Marginal food security**—Households had problems at times, or anxiety about, accessing adequate food, but the quality, variety, and quantity of their food intake were not substantially reduced.
3. **Low food security**—Households reduced the quality, variety, and desirability of their diets, but the quantity of food intake and normal eating patterns were not substantially disrupted.
4. **Very low food security**—At times during the year, eating patterns of one or more household members were disrupted and food intake reduced because the household lacked money and other resources for food.

Since 2006, the USDA has used these categories to conduct a national annual survey of 50,000 households to measure the number of people living with marginal to very low food security.

## What is Poverty?

It's impossible to talk about hunger and food security without talking about poverty. Hunger and food insecurity are primarily consequences of poverty, and the three are inextricably linked. Like the terms "hunger" and "food security", what we mean when we describe someone as poor, or living in poverty, can be interpreted in different ways. It is very important that we understand how we measure poverty because it has a direct impact on the services available to these individuals and families.

### **The American Heritage College Dictionary's definition:**

1. The state of being poor; lack of the basic material goods.
2. Deficiency in amount; scantiness.

**The Merriam Webster Dictionary's definition:** lack of money or material possessions; want.

## How is poverty measured in the United States?

The current federal poverty guidelines in the United States are delineated by family size. The methodology used to determine these guidelines has not been changed since they were developed in the early 1960's. These guidelines were never meant to be the official measure of poverty, but became just that in the late 1960's. When the guidelines were developed families spent about a 1/3 of their income on food; there were typically no childcare costs, and families spent far less on housing. Many economists believe that if we changed the methodology to reflect these changes in our current expenditures - many more people would be considered poor.

Below are the 2009-2010 Poverty Guidelines. Typically, these guidelines are adjusted annually.

### 2011 Poverty Guidelines<sup>1</sup>

Size of Family Unit	48 Contiguous States and DC (in \$)
1	10,890
2	14,710
3	18,530
4	22,350
5	26,170
6	29,990
7	33,810
8	37,630
For each additional person, add	3,820

There are many consequences of poverty. The Food Bank is particularly interested in one of the most basic of those consequences – hunger. These guidelines are used to determine whether individuals and households are eligible for government responses to hunger. If you earn over a certain percentage of the above guidelines for example, you will not be eligible for public benefits like SNAP (formerly known as Food Stamps) and/or WIC (Women, Infant and Children).

Learn more about poverty guidelines: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/faq.shtml>

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<sup>1</sup> *Federal Register*, January 20, 2011 (Volume 76, Number 13. Page 3637-3638).  
(<http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/11fedreg.shtml>)

## Discussion Questions

- How did your definitions of “hunger”, “food security” and “poverty” compare with the official definitions?
- Before this discussion, did you know what *food security* meant?
- Were you aware of how *poverty* is defined in this country?
- What do you think some of the challenges would be to accurately measure household food security in this country?
- How could redefining who is considered poor alter our response to poverty in this country?

## **Activity #3 - What Are Hunger's Consequences?**

### **Description:**

Students will identify and discuss the many health and behavioral impacts of hunger.

### **Objectives:**

This activity will increase awareness of the impact of hunger and identify specific health and behavioral consequences of hunger and low-food security.

**\*Appropriate for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and above- can be adapted for younger audiences.**

### **Time:**

10-15 minutes

### **Materials:**

- Smart board, white board, or flipchart with markers
- List of some of the health and behavioral consequences of hunger  
(*See list below*)

### **Activity Directions:**

- Make two columns on the chalkboard or flip-chart and label one column "health" and the other "behavior".
- Ask students to consider the health and behavioral consequences of hunger. If students are having difficulty identifying any, consider offering a few examples from the list below.
- At the end of the exercise, compare the class list with the list below. Share any of the consequences that did not come up in the discussion.

## Health Consequences: <sup>2</sup>

- Children who are hungry often experience headaches, fatigue, frequent colds, and other illnesses that may cause them to be less physically active.
- Undernourished pregnant women tend to have low birth weight babies. Low birth weight babies suffer from more physical illness, as well as impaired growth and development. Undernourished infants are at greater risk of dying within their first year of life.
- Chronic hunger in adults weakens bones and muscles, increases the risk of illness, worsens existing health problems, and contributes to depression and lack of energy.
- Iron deficiency anemia, a form of malnutrition affecting nearly 25% of poor children in the nation, is associated with impaired cognitive development. Anemia influences attention span and memory. This pervasive deficiency is now known to have a severe impact on cognitive development.
- Poor maternal and infant nutrition affect an infant's birth weight, cognitive development, immune system and overall health.
- Children and pregnant women have relatively high nutrient needs for growth and development. Therefore, they are often the first to show signs of nutrient deficiencies.

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<sup>2</sup> Cook J.T., Frank D.A. Food Security, Poverty, and Human Development in the United States. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*. 2008 (Online Early Articles). doi:10.1196/annals.1425.001, <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/full/10.1196/annals.1425.001?cookieSet=1>.

Jyoti D.F., Frongillo E.A., Jones S.J. Food Insecurity Affects School Children's Academic Performance, Weight Gain, and Social Skills. *J Nutr*, 2005 Dec; 135: 2831-2839.

## Behavioral Consequences<sup>3</sup>

- Children who are hungry may be less attentive, independent, and curious. Many hungry children have difficulty concentrating; therefore their reading ability and verbal and motor skills suffer.
- Short-term nutritional deficiencies affect children's ability to concentrate and perform complex tasks.
- Hunger in adults produces nervousness, irritability, and difficulty in concentration.
- Hunger can have a devastating emotional impact; it may diminish self-confidence and self-esteem. In a culture that encourages self-reliance, individuals who need food assistance may hesitate to seek help. They may experience feelings of shame or embarrassment due to circumstances that are out of their control.

### Discussion Questions

- Are you surprised by any of these consequences to hunger?
- What are some ways that these consequences could impact a community, school, or workplace?
  - (Examples include: high health care costs, high work and school absenteeism, low-school performance)

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<sup>3</sup> <sup>vii</sup>Jyoti D.F., Frongillo E.A., Jones S.J. Food Insecurity Affects School Children's Academic Performance, Weight Gain, and Social Skills. *J Nutr*, 2005 Dec; 135: 2831-2839.

Cook J.T., Frank D.A. Food Security, Poverty, and Human Development in the United States. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*. 2008 (Online Early Articles). doi:10.1196/annals.1425.001, <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/full/10.1196/annals.1425.001?cookieSet=1>.

## Activity #4 - Who Is Hungry?

### Description:

Students will list and discuss groups affected by hunger in the United States.

### Objectives:

To increase awareness of the groups affected by hunger and identify the access issues that impact food security

**\*Appropriate for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and above- can be adapted for younger audiences.**

### Time:

15-20 minutes

### Materials:

- Smart board, white board, or flipchart with markers
- PowerPoint or Fact sheets to share statistics (optional)
- Blank sheets of paper
- Pens or pencils

### Activity Directions:

- Have students brainstorm who they think is hungry in the United States and why. Encourage students to think of as many groups and causes as they can.
- Write each idea on the flip chart as a master list.
- Ask the students to choose the two groups from the list they think are most affected by hunger.
- Answer: While our current economic landscape is constantly changing, in 2009 the two largest groups seeking emergency food in this country were **children (38%) and working families (36%)**. This information is based on *Hunger in America* – A study conducted in 2009 and released in 2010 by Feeding America – the nation’s food bank network. Note that in December 2007 at the start of the recession, national unemployment was around 4.8%. Today that figure hovers around 10%.

- Compare perceptions to reality and correct any misconceptions from list provided below.
  - **Children (38%):** Poverty is the key cause of childhood hunger.
  - **Working Families (36%):** Underemployment, skyrocketing health care and housing costs, and stagnant wages are the primary reasons for many working families needing food assistance.
  - **Acutely or chronically ill (30%):** Thirty percent of people seeking emergency food state that someone in their household is in “poor” health. Causes include: Physically weak, unable to prepare food, eat solid food, or shop, special dietary needs, medical bills.
  - **Uninsured or underinsured (24%):** 3.5 million people report that they or another household member lacks any type of health insurance. This is an increase of 60% since 2005. When accidents happen or health issues come up for people with no insurance, money that would be used for food is now used for health care expenses.

Almost half of adult clients who seek food assistance at food bank partner agencies (46%) report that they or a household member have unpaid medical or hospital bills.

- **Homeless (10%):** Poverty, health issues, and the lack of a safety net are a few of the causes of homelessness. It’s important to note that when food banks were created in the 1970s, it was largely the homeless seeking food assistance. The fact that only 10% of people now seeking help with food are homeless does not mean that the rate of homelessness is decreasing in our country; it simply means that the numbers of working families, children and the sick are increasing.
- **Senior Citizens (8%):** Poverty, health issues and inadequate social support are a few of the issues that impact senior citizens’ access to enough food.

(For more information:

<https://www.hungernet.org/research/hungerstudy/National%20Office%20Docs/Hunger%20Study%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>)