

## 1. HIGHLIGHTS OF FINDINGS

This report presents information on the clients and agencies served by The Greater Berks Food Bank. The information is drawn from a national study, Hunger in America 2010, conducted in 2009 for Feeding America (FA) (formerly America's Second Harvest), the nation's largest organization of emergency food providers. The national study is based on completed in-person interviews with more than 62,000 clients served by the FA national network of food banks, as well as on completed questionnaires from more than 37,000 FA food bank agencies. The study summarized below focuses on emergency food providers and their clients who are supplied with food by food banks in the FA network. Emergency food programs are defined to include food pantries, soup kitchens, and emergency shelters serving short-term residents. It should be recognized that many other types of providers served by food banks are, for the most part, not described in this study, including such programs as Congregate Meals for seniors, day care facilities, after school programs such as the Kids Cafe and Weekender Backpack Programs, and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (senior citizen food totes).

Key findings are summarized below:

### HOW MANY CLIENTS RECEIVE EMERGENCY FOOD FROM THE GREATER BERKS FOOD BANK?

- The FA system served by The Greater Berks Food Bank provides emergency food for an estimated 60,800 different people annually.
- About 10,600 different people receive emergency food assistance in any given week.

### WHO RECEIVES EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE?

FA agencies served by The Greater Berks Food Bank provide food for a broad cross-section of households. Key characteristics include:

- 36% of the members of households served by The Greater Berks Food Bank are children under 18 years old (Table 5.3.2).
- 10% of the members of households are children age 0 to 5 years (Table 5.3.2).
- 6% of the members of households are elderly (Table 5.3.2).
- 56% of clients are non-Hispanic white
- 12% are non-Hispanic black
- 30% are Hispanic
- The rest are from other racial groups (Table 5.6.1).
- 35% of households include at least one employed adult (Table 5.7.1).
- 64% have incomes below the federal poverty level (Table 5.8.2.1) during the previous month. Federal poverty levels defined as a maximum monthly income of:
  - Household of 1 = \$903
  - Household of 2 = \$1,215
  - Household of 3 = \$1,526
  - Household of 4 = \$1,838
  - Household of 5 = \$2,150
  - Household of 6 = \$2,461
  - Household of 7 = \$2,773
  - Household of 8 = 3,085
- 2% are homeless (Table 5.9.1.1).

#### MANY CLIENTS ARE FOOD INSECURE WITH LOW OR VERY LOW FOOD SECURITY

- Among all client households served by emergency food programs of The Greater Berks Food Bank, 78% are food insecure, according to the U.S. government's official food security scale. This includes client households who have low food security and those who have very low food security (Table 6.1.1.1).
- 35% of the clients have very low food security (Table 6.1.1.1).
- Among households with children, 78% are food insecure and 37% are food insecure with very low food security (Table 6.1.1.1).

## MANY CLIENTS REPORT HAVING TO CHOOSE BETWEEN FOOD AND OTHER NECESSITIES

- 43% of clients served by The Greater Berks Food Bank report having to choose between paying for food and paying for utilities or heating fuel (Table 6.5.1).
- 30% had to choose between paying for food and paying their rent or mortgage (Table 6.5.1).
- 33% had to choose between paying for food and paying for medicine or medical care (Table 6.5.1).
- 22% had to choose between paying for food and paying for transportation (Table 6.5.1).
- 22% had to choose between paying for food and paying for gas for a car (Table 6.5.1).

## DO CLIENTS ALSO RECEIVE FOOD ASSISTANCE FROM THE GOVERNMENT?

- 52% of client households served by The Greater Berks Food Bank are receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (Table 7.1.1); however, it is likely that many more are eligible (Table 7.3.2).
- Among households with school-age children, 61% and 49%, respectively, participate in the federal school lunch and school breakfast programs (Table 7.4.1)

## MANY CLIENTS ARE IN POOR HEALTH

- 27% of households served by The Greater Berks Food Bank report having at least one household member in poor health (Table 8.1.1)

## MOST CLIENTS ARE SATISFIED WITH THE SERVICES THEY RECEIVE FROM THE AGENCIES OF THE GREATER BERKS FOOD BANK

- 91% of adult clients said they were either “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with the amount of food they received from their provider; 91% were satisfied with the quality of the food they received (Table 9.2.1).

## HOW LARGE IS THE GREATER BERKS FOOD BANK?

The Greater Berks Food Bank included approximately 112 agencies at the administration of this survey, of which 109 have responded to the agency survey. Of the responding agencies, 88 had at least one food pantry, soup kitchen, or shelter.

*\* The above number refers to the number of agencies that were surveyed for the study. As of February 1, 2010, the Greater Berks Food Bank supplies food to 142 member agencies which support 239 food programs.*

## WHAT KINDS OF ORGANIZATIONS OPERATE EMERGENCY FOOD PROGRAMS OF THE GREATER BERKS FOOD BANK?

- 72% of pantries, 62% of kitchens, and 36% of shelters are run by faith-based agencies affiliated with churches, mosques, synagogues, and other religious organizations (Table 10.6.1).
- At the agency level, 64% of agencies with at least one pantry, kitchen, or shelter and 56% of all agencies including those with other types of programs are faith-based (Table 10.6.1).
- Private nonprofit organizations with no religious affiliation make up a large share of other types of agencies (Table 10.6.1).

## HAVE AGENCIES WITH EMERGENCY FOOD PROVIDERS REPORTED CHANGES IN THE NUMBER OF CLIENTS SEEKING SERVICES?

- Among programs that existed in 2006, 82% of pantries, 43% of kitchens, and 40% of shelters of The Greater Berks Food Bank reported that there had been an increase since 2006 in the number of clients who come to their emergency food program sites (Table 10.8.1).

## WHERE DO AGENCIES WITH EMERGENCY FOOD PROVIDERS OBTAIN THEIR FOOD?

- Food banks are by far the single most important source of food for agencies with emergency food providers, accounting for 87% of the food distributed by pantries, 63% of the food distributed by kitchens, and 47% of the food distributed by shelters (Table 13.1.1).

- Other important sources of food include religious organizations, government, and direct purchases from wholesalers and retailers (Table 13.1.1).

#### VOLUNTEERS ARE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT IN THE FA NETWORK

- As many as 97% of pantries, 91% of kitchens, and 90% of shelters in The Greater Berks Food Bank use volunteers (Table 13.2.1).
- Many programs rely entirely on volunteers; 49% of pantry programs and 21% of kitchens have no paid staff at all (Table 13.2.1).

## **Additional Highlights of Findings**

SUMMARY DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF CLIENTS (TABLE 5.2.1) (page 45)

### **Size of Households (for pantries):**

Size of household:

- Households with 1 member: 25.5%
- Households with 2 - 3 members: 36.5%
- Households with 4 - 6 members: 32.0%
- Households with more than 6 members: 6.0%

**Average household size = 3.2**

Also in (TABLE 5.2.1) (p. 45):

**Households with one or more adults employed (for pantries): 42.7%**

**93.3% of pantry clients and 100% of soup kitchen clients are U.S. Citizens (page 46)**

**35.3% of pantry households had very low food security (experienced a reduction in food intake or disruption in eating patterns). 41.9% experienced low food security (faced with food access problems, but typically do not experience incidents of reduced food intake). (TABLE 6.1.1.1)(page 91)**