



PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

STUDY SHOWS CHILDREN IN TEXAS PANHANDLE MORE LIKELY TO FACE HUNGER THAN OVERALL POPULATION ACROSS AMERICA

Child food insecurity rates in High Plains Food Bank service area are higher than overall food insecurity rates

AMARILLO, TEXAS – May 1, 2019 – High Plains Food Bank announces the release of Map the Meal Gap 2019, the latest report by Feeding America® on food insecurity and the cost of food. It is the only study that provides food insecurity data at the local level.

“There isn’t a single state or county in America free from child hunger, and it is within our collective power to change that and ensure that today’s children are tomorrow’s leaders,” said Claire Babineaux-Fontenot, chief executive officer of Feeding America. “The Feeding America nationwide network of food banks is investing in our nation’s future by helping to provide over 146 million meals to children every year. Still, Map the Meal Gap highlights that more must be done. Together food banks, corporations, policymakers, donors, volunteers and advocates can solve hunger.”

“I encourage everyone to visit the website, map.feedingamerica.org to find out what hunger looks like in their community and get involved to be part of the solution,” Babineaux-Fontenot continued. “One way is to tell Congress to invest in kids during Child Nutrition Reauthorization legislation and increase access to food for kids during the summer. Your voice matters and we can make a difference.”

Map the Meal Gap 2019 reveals that food insecurity exists in every county in High Plains Food Bank’s service area. It also shows that children are more likely to be food insecure, with the child food insecurity rate at 21.9% compared to 14% for the overall population for the top 29 counties in the Texas Panhandle. Overall food insecurity in the Texas Panhandle ranges from a low of 8.7% of the population in Deaf Smith County up to 18.4% in Hall County.

The analysis also finds that 33.7% of Texas Panhandle residents who are food insecure are likely ineligible for federal nutrition assistance under current program requirements. This means that many households must rely even more on charitable food assistance such as the High Plains Food Bank.

“Across the Texas Panhandle, there is still 1 in 7 individuals and 1 in 5 children who struggle with consistently having enough food to live a healthy life. That, along with a nearly 5% increase in food-insecure individuals who are over the income limits for government assistance, solidifies the need for High Plains Food Bank to continue alleviating hunger through our agency network and programs.”

In 2018, High Plains Food Bank distributed 8.25 million pounds of food, which is equivalent to the record high distribution set in 2017.

“It’s becoming increasingly difficult to sustain the programs and services to meet the need, because we’ve seen a sharp decline in individual giving,” said Wilson. “Donations were down by \$121,000 in the first quarter of 2019, compared to 2016. In order to continue fighting hunger across the Texas Panhandle, we really need support to fill that gap.”

High Plains Food Bank is a member of Feeding America’s hunger-relief network comprised of 200 food banks and 60,000 food pantries and meal programs that together provides food assistance to more than 40 million people in the U.S. struggling with hunger. Map the Meal Gap 2019 uses data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Census Bureau,

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and food price data and analysis provided by Nielsen, a global provider of information and insights. The study is supported by The Howard G. Buffett Foundation, Conagra Brands Foundation and Nielsen.

Key local findings:

- 66,740 individuals (1 in 7) and 27,860 (1 in 5) children across the Texas Panhandle face food insecurity
- The estimated share of food-insecure individuals who earn too much to qualify for most federal nutrition assistance programs increased to 33.7% from 29%, an increase of 4.7%
- The total food budget shortfall across our service area \$34,704,000
- The average meal cost in our service area is \$3.03, just slightly above the national average of \$3.02. The meal cost ranged from \$2.86 in Hale County to \$3.32 in Randall County.
- Food insecurity rates increased in 4 rural counties in the Texas Panhandle: Castro, Deaf Smith, Hale and Parmer

The study's findings underscore the extent of need that remains in the Texas Panhandle and across the U.S., despite national measures from the USDA that indicate overall improvement. Dr. Craig Gundersen, Professor of Agricultural and Consumer Economics at the University of Illinois, Executive Director of the National Soybean Research Laboratory and a member of Feeding America's Technical Advisory Group is the lead researcher of Map the Meal Gap 2019.

This is the ninth consecutive year that Feeding America has conducted the Map the Meal Gap study. The Map the Meal Gap 2019 interactive map allows policymakers, state agencies, corporate partners, food banks and advocates to develop integrated strategies to fight hunger on a community level. A summary of the findings, an interactive map of the United States, and the full report are available at map.feedingamerica.org.

Join the conversation about Map the Meal Gap 2019 on Twitter using #MealGap.

For more information, or media interviews, please contact: Tina Brohlin, Communications & Marketing Manager, 806-350-1435, or tina@hpfb.org.

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About High Plains Food Bank

High Plains Food Bank's mission is to alleviate hunger in the Texas Panhandle. HPFB secures, processes, stores and distributes food to more than 190 partner agencies, across the top 29 counties in Texas. These food pantries provide a network to provide food assistance directly to the 1 in 7 local people who struggle with food insecurity, including 1 in 5 children. In 2018, HPFB distributed 8.25 million pounds of food, an amount equal to the all-time record set in 2017.

To combat food insecurity and improve the overall health of clients we serve, HPFB provides a variety of community programs, including: Kids Cafe, Direct Mobile Distribution, a senior adult food program (CSFP), and nutrition education through The Garden at High Plains Food Bank. HPFB can also help individuals with applying for SNAP, CHIP, and Medicaid. In addition to fighting hunger and supporting better health, food banking decreases waste by distributing food that would otherwise go uneaten to people who need it. *High Plains Food Bank is an equal opportunity provider.

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About Feeding America

Feeding America® is the largest hunger-relief organization in the United States. Through a network of 200 food banks and 60,000 food pantries and meal programs, we provide meals to more than 46 million people each year. Feeding America also supports programs that prevent food waste and improve food security among the people we serve; educates the public about the problem of hunger; and advocates for legislation that protects people from going hungry. Visit www.feedingamerica.org, find us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter.

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