

The Issue

- The USDA defines food insecurity as a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food.
- Contributors to food insecurity include unemployment, low wages, high housing and energy costs, high medical costs and food deserts.
- While people from all walks of life experience food insecurity, vulnerable groups such as the elderly and ethnic minorities are at an increased risk.
- According to a 2016 report by the Illinois Commission to End Hunger, nearly 1.7 million people in Illinois are food insecure. This translates to a statewide food insecurity rate of 12.9 percent. This percentage is even higher in the majority of Presence Health's service areas, including Cook, Kankakee, Vermillion, and Champaign Counties.

Impact

- Food security is an important public health issue, with impacts across the lifespan.
- Babies born to food insecure mothers are more likely to be underweight, which is in turn linked to health problems later in life, including diabetes, heart disease, and obesity.
- Children who are food insecure are hospitalized more often, often experience behavioral problems at school, and are at a higher risk of experiencing certain chronic health conditions such as anemia and asthma.
- Food insecurity hampers effective management of chronic diseases like diabetes.
- Food insecure older adults experience more difficulties with activities of daily living and are more likely to be depressed than their food secure counterparts.

Our Position

- **Presence Health supports access to fresh, nutritious foods.** Presence Health offers programs, engages in partnerships and supports public policies that alleviate poverty and hunger, and promote access to fresh, nutritious foods.
- **Presence Health partners to solve problems.** Presence Saints Mary and Elizabeth Medical Center is working to increase access to fresh and healthy food by opening a farmer's market on campus and to offer double purchase value on produce to SNAP recipients. Presence Health also partners with the Healthy Schools Campaign, an organization that works to promote healthier kids and a healthy school environment.