



RUNNING ON EMPTY: NUTRITIONAL ACCESS FOR CHILDREN IN COOK COUNTY

In an effort to make informed decisions about program expansion and enhancement, the Greater Chicago Food Depository commissioned the Social IMPACT Research Center of Heartland Alliance to conduct a study of child nutrition program coverage and child nutrition and hunger in Cook County. The study examined the geographic coverage of child nutrition programs to identify areas that have the greatest number of unserved children. The study also took an in-depth look at the nutritional lives of 437 children attending summer nutrition programs by assessing their levels of food security and their food consumption in the previous 24 hours. This study helps to identify Chicago community areas and Cook County municipalities that are most in need of child nutrition program investments. Its findings pinpoint locations where current child nutrition programs can be strengthened to lower food insecurity and enhance the nutritional lives of school-age children.

Nutritional intake findings

- Overall, 45 percent of children missed a main meal in their last 24 hours:
 - 15 percent of children did not eat breakfast.
 - 23 percent of children did not eat lunch.
 - 15 percent of children did not eat dinner.
- In no main food group (fruit, vegetables, grains, dairy, proteins) did even half of the children meet the recommended daily allowance (RDA) established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- 7.8 percent of all children met the RDA for both fruit and vegetables.
- Only 0.7 percent met the RDA for all five food groups.
- Overall, food served through the out-of-school program was healthier than that served at home, and out-of-school programs had a significant positive impact on fruit and vegetable consumption.

Food insecurity findings

- 54 percent of the children were food insecure
- 39 percent of the children were food insecure without hunger, meaning that they report reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet, but little or no indication of reduced food intake.
- Nearly 1 in 6 children were food insecure *with* hunger, meaning that they report multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.

Summer and school-year program coverage

- The following *Chicago community areas* had the highest number of unserved children on an average day during the summer and/or during the school year: South Lawndale, Belmont Cragin, Austin, West Town and the Near West Side.
- The following *Suburban Cook County municipalities* had the highest number of unserved children on an average day during the summer and/or during the school-year: Cicero, Berwyn, Chicago Heights, Calumet City, Palatine and Harvey.