



Indy Hunger Network Releases 2021 Hunger Study

The study revealed approximately 25% of Marion County residents are experiencing food insecurity

INDIANAPOLIS, November 18, 2021 – Indy Hunger Network (IHN), a coalition of representatives from leading anti-hunger organizations in Indianapolis, today announced the findings of its 2021 Hunger Study, an assessment of food assistance needs in Marion County. It was sponsored by the Indiana Minority Health Coalition. The study revealed that 25% of Marion County families struggle to put meals on their tables, compared to 28% in 2020.

The vast majority of this population's food need was addressed through Federal nutrition programs and private charities. The needs of three-quarters of households were fully met with food assistance. The remaining one-quarter of households needing assistance missed meals in the course of a week, which amounts to approximately 45,000 people. The meals missed amounted to 6.8 million meals on annual basis.

"Despite the fact that there are more Marion County families experiencing food insecurity compared to pre-pandemic levels, there has been a remarkable increase in the supply of food from Federal nutrition programs, the efforts of Indy Hunger Network and its partners, and the generous support of fellow Hoosiers," said Kate Howe, Executive Director, Indy Hunger Network. "Their continued support will be essential as we head into the winter months, when families are most often at risk of experiencing a shortfall in their food supply."

Since IHN began monitoring the unmet need for food assistance in 2014, the gap in meal supply has been reduced from 6% to 2%. The main opportunity that remains is improving access to the available sources of nutritious food. Factors that contribute to access challenges often include the stress and constraints of living on the edge of poverty, the stigma surrounding seeking help, transportation challenges, a lack of information on where to turn for food assistance and challenges enrolling in federal programs such as SNAP. Currently, SNAP provides 46% of all food assistance. The program also improves access to nutritious meals. An estimated 64% of families receiving SNAP benefits were able to eat balanced meals compared to 54% of those not enrolled in the program. It will be vital to ensure households' needs continue to be met as Hoosiers have returned to work and may not qualify for SNAP, but often still struggle to make ends meet.

IHN officials are dedicated to improving access to food supply, with a particular focus on nutritious meals. Nutrition among families with food assistance needs has shown signs of improvement, with nearly 13% of households reportedly eating nutritious meals regularly compared to 4.7% in 2017. However, there is still opportunity to make significant progress. Nearly nine out of ten households with food assistance needs are not reliably eating nutritious meals. The food groups most often lacking in family diets are fruits and vegetables.

Similar to last year's study, the hunger study data revealed a racial disparity in food insufficiency, with 21% of Black families experiencing food insufficiency compared to 9.9% of the general population. However, improvements have been made in reaching these households. The proportion of Black families whose food needs were fully addressed was comparable to the general population. For those families whose needs were not fully met, the average number of



missed meals was the same for white families and Black families in Marion County, averaging three missed meals per person per week.

Hoosiers can support Indy Hunger Network in its efforts to continue to increase food supply and access to nutritious foods in Marion County by understanding the need for food assistance is still prevalent and finding ways to get involved. IHN suggests volunteering at local food pantries to reduce lines and supporting legislation that maintains federal nutrition programs, including SNAP and WIC. For more information on IHN and to view the full 2021 Hunger Study, please visit <https://www.indyhunger.org/>.

About Indy Hunger Network

The Indy Hunger Network is a coalition of representatives from leading Indianapolis anti-hunger organizations, both public and private, dedicated to improving the food assistance system. The goal of the Indy Hunger Network is to create a system that ensures anyone in Marion County who is hungry can access the nutritious food they need. The organization was founded in 2009. For more information, please visit Indyhunger.org.