

How can Fairfax County address food insecurity among immigrant families?

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Food insecurity is a challenge for families across the United States.



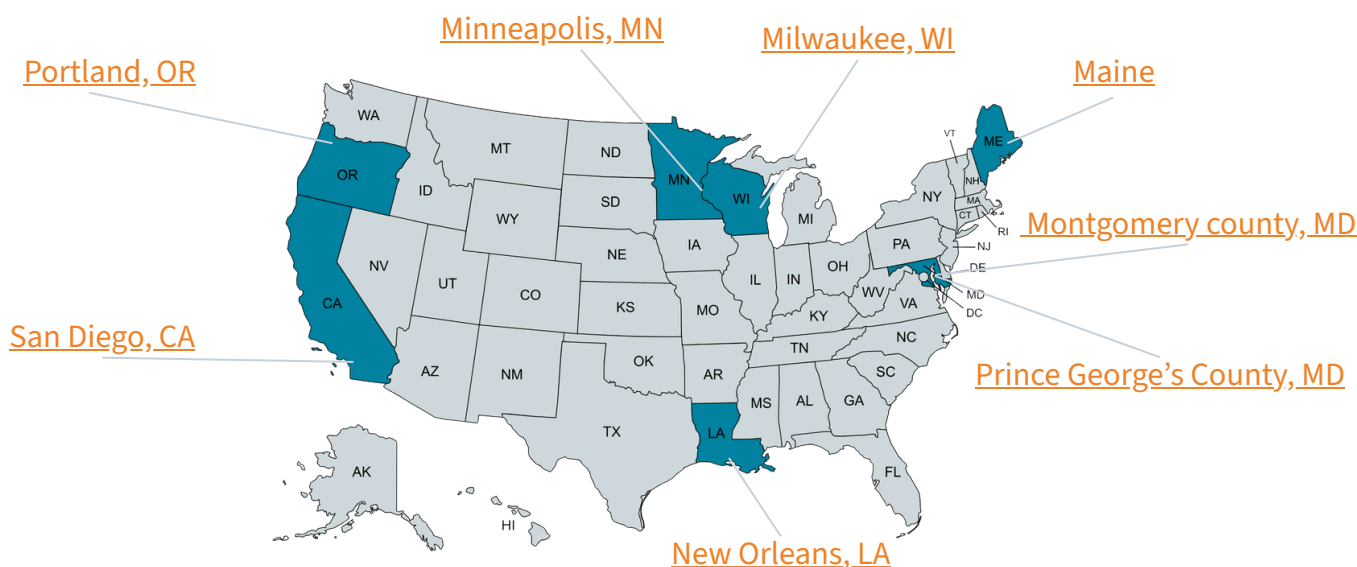
Food insecurity, or the lack of access to adequate food, affects approximately one in seven (13.7 %) households across the U.S.¹

Immigrant families face unique challenges that put them at disproportionately higher risk of food insecurity than U.S.-born citizens.^{2,3} Recent upticks in federal and local immigration enforcement may further exacerbate this disparity: studies have shown that local-level immigration enforcement policies and fears related to these changes contribute to greater food insecurity among immigrant communities.^{4,5}

Many local communities across the country have reported that increased immigration enforcement activity over the last two years has led to a noticeable decrease in usage of food pantries and attendance at food distribution events.

Communities across the US are reporting decreased food distribution amidst increased immigration enforcement activity.

Click the links below for more information on each city/state.



Lessons learned from other locales

Six themes emerged through our review of local news reports in communities that are experiencing similar challenges:

1

De-centralize food distribution and meet people where they are.

Use multiple, smaller, community-based access points rather than relying on large distribution events. Bring food to people where they already live, work, or gather. Prioritize trust and safety over efficiency or systematization.

2

Build on existing infrastructure and trusted community relationships.

Partner with local institutions, such as schools, churches, nonprofits, and foodbanks, as well as less traditional places, such as barbershops and other local businesses. Prioritize organizations that already have trusted relationships with immigrant communities.

3

Use discreet, targeted communication strategies.

Broad public advertising may affect people's willingness to attend or gather. Use more discreet or targeted communication channels, such as text chains, listservs, private social media groups, and direct outreach via trusted community organizations and leaders.

4

Minimize barriers, documentation, and information collection.

Avoid unnecessary eligibility verification, paperwork, or documentation requirements. Avoid collecting personal information and asking questions that are not necessary to provide food assistance, as concerns about immigration enforcement make people reluctant to share information.

5

Integrate rights and safety information into food access efforts.

If/when appropriate, provide practical information about individuals' rights and how to respond to interactions with immigration enforcement alongside food assistance.

6

Design strategies for continuity and longevity.

Consider approaches that can serve people over an extended period while minimizing the frequency with which they need to travel to or interact with distribution sites (e.g., prioritizing foods with longer shelf lives).

Exemplar programs and strategies in the DC, Maryland, Virginia (DMV) region:



Food Justice DMV

A pandemic-born, volunteer operation that delivers food directly to households, largely undocumented people or asylum seekers.

Contact form: [Food Justice DMV](#)



Alive! Nonprofit (based in Alexandria county, VA)

ALIVE! helps Alexandrians through their two Food Hubs, pantry partners, and distribution sites; respond to financial emergencies and prevent eviction; and secure other support services and essential needs such as housewares and furniture. ALIVE! is also supported by the City of Alexandria, community and civic organizations, local businesses, and volunteers working together to provide basic needs support to Alexandrians.

Contact information (from their webpage): info@alive-inc.org or 703-837-9300



Arlington County, VA Food Assistance Resources Map

Similar to Fairfax County's [Emergency Food Access Providers Map](#) but includes filters for eligibility requirements, no photo ID or registration required, etc. which may be helpful for immigrant families.

Exemplar programs and strategies in the DC, Maryland, Virginia (DMV) region:

Capital Area Food Bank



Largest hunger-relief organization in the DMV region, works with 400+ nonprofit partners across the region. Accepts food donations, prepares items for distribution, and provides food to families and individuals with the assistance of nonprofit partners. Also distributed food directly into the community where a brick and mortar isn't available, or via other methods: after-school meals for kids, free produce markets, and emergency food distributions when needed.

See their [Hunger Report](#) and [Annual Impact Report](#).

Contact form: See their Hunger Report and Annual Impact Report. (Note: their webpage mentions inability to take student interviews due to time and staffing constraints).

The Upcounty Hub

(based in Montgomery county, MD)



The Upcounty Hub was founded with the philosophy of providing individuals and families with food and other essentials, without requiring documentation to prove necessity, allowing them to maintain their privacy and dignity. Distributes over 30,000 pounds of food and other essentials through drive-thru distributions, home deliveries, case management, and emergency assistance.

Contact form: <https://www.theupcountyhub.org/contact>



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Methods

Findings presented in this brief come from a literature review of academic peer-reviewed studies, as well as reports from non-partisan think tanks, foundations, and county and state program websites. Given the rapid nature of this search, other relevant studies may exist. In addition, please note that we did not use formal statistical methods for summarizing results and exploring reasons for differences in findings across studies.

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