



## PRESS RELEASE

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## STUDY SHOWS CHILDREN IN EASTERN ILLINOIS MORE LIKELY TO FACE HUNGER THAN OVERAL POPULATION ACROSS AMERICA

***Child food insecurity rates in Eastern Illinois Foodbank's service area are higher than overall food insecurity rates***

URBANA, Illinois – Eastern Illinois Foodbank announced the release of *Map the Meal Gap 2019*, the latest report by Feeding America on food insecurity and the cost of food at both the county and congressional district level. It is the only study that provides food insecurity data at the local level.

*Map the Meal Gap 2019* reveals that food insecurity exists in every county in Eastern Illinois Foodbank's service area. It also shows that children are more likely to be food insecure, with the child food insecurity rate at 16.5% compared to 10.9% for the overall population for eastern Illinois.

"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](http://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."

Overall food insecurity in eastern Illinois ranges from a low of 7.5% of the population in Piatt County up to 15% in Champaign County.

The analysis also finds that more than 35% of residents of eastern Illinois 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 Eastern Illinois Foodbank.

Eastern Illinois Foodbank 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. 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*. The study is supported by The Howard G. Buffett Foundation, Conagra Brands Foundation and Nielsen.

*“Map the Meal Gap demonstrates the enormous variation of food insecurity across and even within states,”* Gunderson said. *“It points out to foodbanks how important it is to drill down to the local level in order to direct assistance.”*

Key local findings:

- Three of the counties in Eastern Illinois Foodbank’s service area (Champaign, Vermilion and Coles) have food-insecurity rates higher than Cook County
- The average annual food budget shortfall that food-insecure individuals in Champaign County report needing to purchase just enough food to meet their food needs exceeds \$15 million
- At 20.7%, Vermilion County has the highest child-insecurity rate in eastern Illinois

The study’s findings underscore the extent of need that remains in communities in eastern Illinois and across the U.S., despite national measures from the USDA that indicate overall improvement.

This is the ninth consecutive year that Feeding America has conducted the *Map the Meal Gap* study.

A summary of the findings, an interactive map of the United States and the full report are available at [map.feedingamerica.org](http://map.feedingamerica.org).

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

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#### ***About Eastern Illinois Foodbank***

*Eastern Illinois Foodbank works to alleviate hunger in eastern Illinois through cooperation with a network of food pantries, agencies and other programs. The Foodbank distributes donated and discounted food throughout a 17-county service area in cooperation with over 200 member agencies and programs. Through these agencies, the Foodbank provides meals to more than 116,000 men, women and children each year. The Eastern Illinois Foodbank is a member of Feeding America, Feeding Illinois, the United Way of Coles County, and the United Way of Champaign County. For more information, visit [eifoodbank.org](http://eifoodbank.org).*

#### ***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](http://www.feedingamerica.org) for more information.*