Outline

I. The Nutritional State of Texas
II. Seeking Solutions
III. Looking Back on Our Accomplishments
IV. Looking Ahead - Food Policy Priorities in 2012
V. Our Partners
The Nutritional State of Texas: A Tale of Two Problems
Texas Plagued by High Rates of Food Insecurity and Obesity

- Food insecurity & obesity are flip sides of a coin.
- Low-income people are at a greater risk for both:
  - Inadequate resources
  - Lack of awareness
  - Unsafe neighborhoods/limited access to exercise
  - Limited access to healthy & affordable food
- Both problems come with serious consequences and a hefty price tag for Texas.
Food Insecurity

- Almost one in five Texas families (18.8%) struggles to afford food, the second-highest rate in the nation.
- Children at the highest risk of hunger, with over one in five children (28.2%) in Texas living in a home without enough food.
- Education and health consequences are great.
Texas vs. The Nation

- 81.2% Food Secure Households
- 11.9% Households with Low Food Security
- 6.9% Households with Very Low Food Security

Food-security Status of US Households, 2010

- 85.5% Food-secure households
- 9.1% Households with low food security
- 5.4% Households with very low food security

Overweight & Obesity

• 66.7 percent of adult Texans are overweight or obese, up from 64.1 percent in 2005.
• In 2007, almost one-third (32 percent) of Texas high-school students were overweight or obese.
• Health consequences and co-morbidities are great.
• Annual cost of treating obesity-related diseases was $9.5 billion in 2009, could rise to $32.5 billion annually by 2030.
Solutions
Big Picture

• Long-term solution must attack the root causes of poverty.
• In the short-term:
  – food assistance programs
  – lifestyle interventions
  – changes to built environment
  – increasing access to healthy/affordable food

• Can prevent hunger, fight obesity and improve nutrition.
Federal Food Assistance Programs

- Prevent hunger & improve nutrition (SNAP, school lunch/breakfast, CACFP, WIC, Commodities)
- Increase family economic security (especially during economic downturn)
- Bring federal funds to low-income communities ($1 in SNAP generate $1.84 in economic activity)
- Free up resources for other programming for children in afterschool/child care/summer programs (“building blocks” concept)
# Federal Nutrition Programs

**Texas Participation in Federal Food Safety Net Programs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Recipients</th>
<th>Total Funds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SNAP/Food Stamps</td>
<td>3,551,581</td>
<td>5,447,397,414</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Breakfast</td>
<td>1,387,827</td>
<td>1,358,261,303</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Lunch</td>
<td>2,950,035</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Summer Food</td>
<td>530,474</td>
<td>45,860,494</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child and Adult Care Food Program</td>
<td>228,601</td>
<td>249,233,824</td>
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<tr>
<td>USDA Commodities (for food banks/disaster/school lunch/summer food/Senior Farmer's Market Program)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>162,475,258</td>
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<tr>
<td>WIC</td>
<td>1,051,617</td>
<td>882,061,424</td>
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Improving Food Assistance Programs

• Make sure everyone eligible for food assistance is getting it.
• Make sure everyone who needs food assistance is getting it.
Food Programs Fail to Reach Everyone in Need

- Just over half of eligible population gets SNAP.
- Only 1 in 5 low-income children get summer meals.
- WIC misses 158,000 low-income eligible children.
- Since eligibility is tied to the official poverty measure, many needy families don’t qualify for federal food assistance.
Federal Programs, State Choices

• Funding for benefits/meals is 100% federal.
• State/school districts pay some administrative costs.
• National structure and standards,
• Lots of state policy options & flexibility in administrative choices.
• State decisions critical to maximize reach/benefits of programs.
Looking Back…

• Required low-income school districts required to offer breakfast programs (1995)
  – 99% of schools now offer breakfast
  – Texas has among the best breakfast participation rates in the nation

• Expanded WIC clinic hours (1997)
  – Approx. 90% of eligible women, infants and children participate

• Required low-income school districts to offer summer food programs (1997)
  – Increased number of program sponsors by 60%
  – Quadrupled number of children served & increased number of meals served 78%.
Looking Back…

• Secured state funds for support SNAP (& Medicaid/CHIP) outreach and application assistance (1999)
• Increased access to SNAP through policy simplifications (2001). From 2000 to 2005, enrollment in SNAP increased 65%.
• Secured $300K in seed funding for food banks to provide fresh produce to hungry families (2001)
  – Today, the Texas Food Bank Network receives $2 million to purchase and distribute surplus agricultural products from Texas farms.
Looking Back…

• Improved process to automatically enroll children on SNAP in free school lunch, reducing cost/barriers (2005)
• School breakfast study (2007)
• Increased funding for front-line staff who enroll families in SNAP (2007, 2009)
2011 Accomplishments

• Nutrition Programs
  – Increased access to summer meal sites by requiring more school districts in low-income communities to sponsor the federally funded Summer Food Program.
  – Blocked attempts to restrict consumer choice in SNAP.

• Eligibility and Enrollment
  – Maintained current funding levels for eligibility caseworkers.
  – Eliminated the intrusive requirement that applicants for TANF and SNAP be finger imaged.
  – Enacted legislation to improve the efficiency of eligibility and enrollment processes.
  – Improved access to public benefits by enhancing HHSC’s partnerships with community-based organizations that provide outreach and application assistance.
Looking Ahead...
HHSC Eligibility Modernization

• Enhanced self-service portal with special portal for CBOs
• CPPP member of External Advisory Committee
• HHSC executive-level modernization project working to streamline policy/processes
Relevant Interim Charges

• **House Committee on Agriculture & Livestock**
  – Role of *community gardens* and *urban farming efforts* in increasing access to healthy foods

• **House Committee on Human Services**
  – Identify policies to *alleviate food insecurity*, increase *access* to healthy foods, and *incent good nutrition* within existing food assistance programs.
  – Evaluate incorporation of *nutritional standards* in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
  – Monitor congressional activity on the *2012 Farm Bill*.

• **Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee**
  – *Increase the use of Texas agricultural products* in healthy foods readily available to Texas consumers.
  – Role of *community initiatives in reducing obesity/diet-related diseases*. 
Improving Food Access

• **Texas Food Deserts**
  – Texas has the lowest number of supermarkets per capita of any state in the nation.
  – Houston is one of the nation’s fastest growing metropolitan areas and yet it has fewer supermarkets per capita than most major cities.

• **Interim charge**

• **The Food Trust** (http://www.thefoodtrust.org/)
  – Fresh Food Financing Initiatives
  – Houston Pilot
Federal Budget

• The Budget Control Act locks in a 10-year downward spiral in spending on discretionary programs, affecting WIC, CSFP, TEFAP Administration

• Automatic across-the-board cuts (“sequestration”) won’t affect SNAP/Food Stamps, child nutrition programs, which are exempt from the cuts.
2012 Farm Bill

Opportunities -
• Address gaps in access.
• Improve adequacy of program benefits.
• Lessen administrative burdens.

Risks -
• Across-the-board cuts
• Block grant
• Reductions in eligibility
Our Partners

Texas Food Policy Roundtable

TEXAS FOOD BANK NETWORK

TEXAS HUNGER INITIATIVE

Texas Health and Human Services Commission

Texas Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition

Mission: Feeding the hungry and promoting healthy lifestyles.

Partnership for a Healthy Texas

Conquering Obesity

TEXAS WIC

Smart Choices • Healthy Families

H·E·B
Here Everything's Better.
Texas Food Policy Roundtable

**Mission:** Develop, coordinate, and improve the implementation of food policy to address hunger and promote equitable, sustainable, and healthy food in Texas

**Membership:** Christian Life Commission, Texas Impact, Texans Care for Children, Texas Food Bank Network

**Focus Areas:** SNAP Outreach and Access, Summer Food Program, Obesity & Nutrition, Sustainability

http://txfoodpolicy.org/
The Partnership for a Healthy Texas

- **Mission:** Identify and support policy that will have the most impact on the obesity epidemic
- **Membership:** 22 organizations including AHA, TMA, Children at Risk, AARP, American Cancer Society, BCBS of Texas, Texans Care for Children, Texas Pediatrics Society
- **Focus areas:** Texas School Nutrition Policy, Coordinated School Health, Worksite Wellness, Statewide Obesity Prevention Policies, Built Environment

http://www.partnershipforahealthytexas.org/
Expanding Our Capacity

- Expand food policy work at CPPP through partnership with Texas Hunger Initiative, Baylor University.
- Current status:
  - Some seed money in place.
  - Seeking additional funding.
  - Hiring new part-time analyst in February.