



**EASTERN BAND OF CHEROKEE PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES DIVISION  
HEALTH PRIORITY ISSUES: FACTS AND RESOURCES  
JUNE 1, 2019**

## **EBCI HEALTH PRIORITY – FOOD INSECURITY**



***Food insecurity** is defined as the disruption of food intake or eating patterns due to lack of money or other resources.<sup>1</sup> Those that are food insecure may have disruptive eating patterns, reduced quality or quantity of food, reduced variety of food, or a less desirable diet due to lack of resources.<sup>1</sup>*

*When someone has **food security**, they have access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.<sup>1</sup> Being food secure is one of several conditions necessary for a population to be healthy and well nourished. Neighborhood conditions can play a significant role in access to food. Communities that lack access or are located long distances from affordable and nutritious food are often referred to as food deserts. Food insecurity can lead to many negative health outcomes and disparities such as an increased risk of obesity and other chronic diseases.<sup>1</sup>*

### **Data Highlights**

#### **Health Indicators**

Food Insecurity by the numbers

- In 2016, the CDC estimated that food insecurity affected 19.3% of US adults.<sup>2</sup>
  - Among those affected:
    - 58% received no assistance
    - 20.3% received only Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits
    - 9.7% received only food bank assistance
    - 12% received both SNAP and food bank assistance.<sup>2</sup>
- In 2014, the USDA estimated that 14.4 million U.S. households were food insecure at some time during the year.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2017, North Carolina's population affected by food insecurity was estimated at 18%.<sup>3</sup>
  - Swain Co. 18%
  - Jackson Co. 16%
  - Haywood Co. 14%
  - Graham Co. 18%
  - Cherokee Co. 14%
- American Indian and Alaska Natives are 25% more likely to be food insecure compared to the white population often due to their rural or economically disadvantaged location.<sup>4</sup>

## **Understanding the Issue**

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food deserts in rural locations as a location that forces someone to travel over 10 miles to purchase food.<sup>5</sup> With greater distances to grocery stores comes a greater risk of food insecurity. Many of those in food deserts end up getting food from closer convenience stores that often lack healthy options, such as fresh fruit and vegetables.

Below are some of the food insecurity survey statistics from the 2017 Tribal Health Survey and the 2016 Tribal Elder Survey.

- 2017 Tribal Community Health Survey
  - 47% of respondents found it “very difficult” or “somewhat difficult” to buy fresh produce at a price they can afford.
  - 41% of respondents indicated that they must travel 5-10 miles to get groceries.
  - 22% of respondents indicated that they must travel more than 10 miles to get groceries.
  - 24% went hungry at least once in the past year because there was not enough money for food.
- 2016 Tribal Elder Survey
  - 11.2% ate fewer than 2 meals a day.
  - 4.8% didn’t always have enough money to buy food they needed.
  - 22.5% ate too few fresh fruits, vegetables, or milk products.

## **Specific Populations At Risk**

Food insecurity risk factors include:

- Those with children in the household.
- Households with children headed by a single woman or man.
- African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Hispanic households
- Households with persons with disabilities
- Those with poor health
- Those living in neighborhoods with high housing costs or in neighborhoods where housing takes up a significant portion of the household income.
- Those that experiencing prolonged unemployment or those that are underemployed.

## **Health Resources available/needed**

- PHHS’ Family Support provides a food pantry service that offers a three-day supply in emergencies. Please call (828) 359-6092 for assistance.
- PHHS’ WIC program provides assistance to those that are pregnant, breast feeding and postpartum women, infants, and children up to age five. To learn more call (828) 359-6232.
- PHHS’ Tribal Foods Distribution program offers eligible households on the Qualla Boundary food. For more information and to find out if you are eligible for this program please call (828) 359-9751.

- The Tribal Senior Citizens program offers a hot nutritious meal each weekday from 11:30am to 12:00pm at Tsalii Manor, Snowbird, and John Welch Center location in Cherokee Co. They also offer a homebound meal program, an Ensure program, and transportation to program facilities. For more information about these program and qualifications, please call 828-359-6291 or visit <http://www.cherokee-hmd.com/senior-citizens/index.html>.
- The North Carolina Cooperative Extension also provides many helpful services for healthy eating and living. To find out more, visit their website at <https://ebci.ces.ncsu.edu/> or call 828-359-6939.
- For additional EBCI resources, please visit <http://www.cherokee-phhs.com/foodresource.html>.

#### References:

1. <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-health/interventions-resources/food-insecurity#1>
2. [https://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2016/16\\_0103.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2016/16_0103.htm)
3. <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/north-carolina/2017/measure/factors/139/map>
4. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5422031/>
5. [https://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2015/15\\_0065.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2015/15_0065.htm)