



# Coordinating SNAP and Nutrition Supports to Reduce Child Hunger



## Michigan Spotlight: *Data-Driven Strategies to Help End Hunger in Michigan*

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), in partnership with the Food Bank Council of Michigan (FBCM) and Michigan Department of Education (MDE), is deploying a three-pronged strategy to leverage data insights to better understand and reduce food insecurity in the state. This will allow Michigan to:

### Perform On-Demand Data Analysis

By hiring a dedicated data analyst, embedded in the Economic Security Administration (ESA) within MDHHS, Michigan will build capacity to analyze and link the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), school meals, and related program data on demand to inform strategic decisions, design client engagement strategies, and refine outreach methods.

### Improve Client Experience through Referral Tracking System

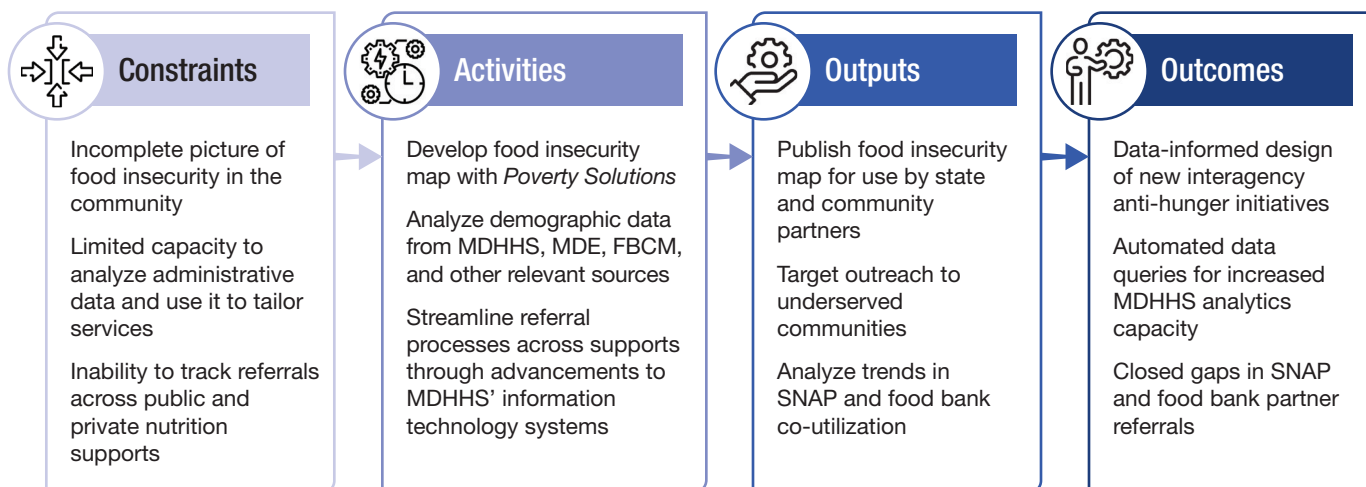
MDHHS will build a feedback loop within its eligibility system to track referrals, client participation, and utilization of assistance between private food banks and SNAP. This functionality will help the state and community partners identify service gaps as well as opportunities for public and private anti-hunger organizations to streamline access across nutrition supports.

### Create a Food Insecurity Map

Working with *Poverty Solutions* at the University of Michigan, MDHHS will combine administrative and publicly available data with data from the referral tracking system to develop a clear understanding of food insecurity and client experience. This information will be used to establish state priorities for reducing hunger and combat disparities in food access for underserved communities.

## Logic Model

*Purpose:* To systematically identify resource gaps and deploy the full array of nutrition supports to combat hunger.



## Background and Context: *Building Upon Michigan's Cross-Program Coordination Strategies*

Michigan's project contributes to a longstanding commitment to coordinating across programs to reduce barriers to accessing nutrition and other critical supports that help people and communities thrive. Recent efforts include:

### Establishing a Cross-Enrollment Coordinator

This role supports intra- and interagency linkages to remove barriers for families to access services.

### Creating a Food and Income Supports Work Group

At the beginning of the pandemic, this group was formed to address significant economic losses and rising rates of food insecurity in Michigan. FBCM, among other community partners, participated to enhance coordination between existing food programs.

### Leading SNAP, Medicaid, and WIC Co-Enrollment Campaigns

In partnership with Benefits Data Trust, data matching was recently used to identify and conduct targeted text-based outreach to households that were likely eligible, but not enrolled in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infant, and Children (WIC).

### Analyzing the "SNAP Gap"

This project helped MDHHS understand and reduce racial disparities that persist among households receiving Medicaid that are not participating in SNAP.

## Problem Identification: *Seeing the Whole Picture to Inform Anti-Hunger Strategies*

Despite continuous progress being made through ongoing efforts, MDHHS currently lacks the ability to fully assess community need and measure the collective impact of anti-hunger initiatives in the state. These gaps have made it difficult to know which strategies to prioritize and what impact they have. Specific limitations include:

### Measuring Food Insecurity in the Community

Publicly available data and tools document food insecurity in Michigan and highlight racial and geographic disparities in hunger. However, the inability to layer these and state administrative data together has hindered MDHHS and FBCM's attempts to identify drivers of food insecurity and develop strategies designed to meet specific community needs.

### Tapping Administrative Data to Tailor Services

MDHHS conducts text-based outreach campaigns to contact households that are underutilizing nutrition supports, but lacks capacity to regularly retrieve data from warehouses, limiting its ability to refresh outreach lists, sequence outreach attempts, and track responses in a timely manner.

### Tracking Referrals Across Food Nutrition Supports

MDHHS works closely with FBCM—one of the agency's largest SNAP Outreach partners—and its network of food banks and pantries, but they have no way to jointly evaluate referral outcomes. Without data on success rates and why some referrals fail, MDHHS and FBCM have struggled to advance a unified system that ensures people are connected to nutrition supports.






“ MDHHS is constantly working to provide children and families with better access to food. This grant allows us to build upon our work with valued partners who share our commitment to reduce hunger in Michigan. Through innovative use of available data, including mapping the landscape of food insecurity, we will be better positioned to address unmet needs. This stronger alignment of available services will improve our ability to meet the needs of our neighbors. ”

*Lew Roubal*

Chief Deputy Director for Opportunity for the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

## Project Implementation Plan

To tackle these problems, MDHHS has launched an ambitious effort to plan, develop, and implement a food insecurity map, on-demand data analysis, and a client experience system that will enable the state to take a coordinated, data-driven approach to combating food insecurity in Michigan.

	 Plan	 Develop	 Implement
<b>Food Insecurity Map</b>	Identify relevant data sources Begin design process with <i>Poverty Solutions</i>	Finalize map layout Solicit user feedback	Launch map online Utilize data to craft anti-hunger goals
<b>On-Demand Data Analysis</b>	Hire data analyst Outline plan for identifying gaps in nutrition supports	Analyze disparities in access to nutrition supports Draft plans for feedback loop	Manage food insecurity map and data that feed map Refine outreach strategies for underserved communities
<b>Client Experience</b>	Explore ways to track client referrals Determine how tracking system will be tested	Pilot tracking system in food insecure areas Examine referral data and refine tracking process	Expand tracking system to other areas of Michigan Finalize feedback loop within eligibility system

## Long-Term Goals: *Visualizing the Future of Anti-Hunger Work in Michigan*

Following the conclusion of the project, MDHHS will use their newly developed capabilities to identify food insecure communities, evaluate the success of referrals to nutrition supports, and analyze remaining gaps between SNAP and food access points. Collecting these data regularly will enable MDHHS and its partners to forecast hunger-related needs and publicize information about food resources.

MDHHS' MI Bridges Community Partner Referral Platform allows residents to apply for benefits and search a database of more than 30,000 state and local resources. The platform will aid the work of this project by tracking availability and utilization of food resources.

Over time, MDHHS plans to build out this platform to comprehensively track client referrals to a wide array of nutrition and economic programs that promote family well-being. Moreover, MDHHS plans to work with its partners to draw on the lived expertise of clients who have used nutrition supports to learn more about how they have engaged with referrals to food access points in Michigan.

The food insecurity map, once completed, will be an essential aid to MDHHS as they continue to prioritize equity and tailor outreach to historically underserved communities. These efforts will also inform work being done by Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer's Racial Equity Task Force and supplement an ongoing Equity Impact Assessment of MDHHS' current policies.

Michigan's team will consider this project a success if its food insecurity map and referral tracking system are functional by the end of the grant period and can be used to drive strategic planning for future anti-hunger initiatives.

