

# SCREEN & INTERVENE TOOLKIT



## Food Insecurity in Montgomery County

According to 2017 census data, there are approximately 63,380 food insecure individuals in Montgomery County, of which 30,070 are children. Food insecurity is a household-level economic and social condition meaning that there is limited or uncertain access to adequate food. Food insecurity increases the risk of developmental, academic and emotional problems such as depression and anxiety, social disruption and even attempted suicide in children, as well as chronic diseases in adults. Individuals experiencing food insecurity are two times more likely to have diabetes, 25% more likely to have hypertension, 50% more likely to have kidney disease and four times more likely to have osteoporosis.

## Toolkit Overview

Because Montgomery County is one of the most affluent counties in Maryland, effectively presenting the facts about the number of people experiencing vulnerability or the locations with the highest risk of food insecurity can sometimes be challenging. Food insecurity can occur at all levels of society and can be well hidden. Many people are just one paycheck away from being unable to put food on the table—the recent federal government shutdown in January 2019 being a harrowing case-in-point.

There are many programs in Montgomery County that exist to meet the basic needs of struggling residents, both at the federal and local levels. However, many residents do not know about these resources or how to access them. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known in Maryland as the Food Supplement Program (FSP) is the first line of defense against food insecurity, but according to Maryland Hunger Solutions, 64% of Montgomery County residents who are eligible to receive SNAP benefits are not enrolled. This is the highest rate for any county in Maryland.

One of the recommendations listed in Montgomery County's five year Food Security Plan, released by the County Executive in 2017, is to increase the number of residents participating in benefits programs and connect them to the County resources they need. This Screen & Intervene Toolkit is designed to help identify families who may need assistance with food access, as well as other basic needs. It is designed for healthcare providers, social service providers, community-based outreach workers, teachers, case manager, and workforce development staff.

The "Screen & Intervene QuickStart Guide" is a comprehensive, one-page reference tool that explains WHY screening for food insecurity is important, HOW to do it through the use of two simple, nationally validated questions, and most importantly, WHAT you can do to assist someone who screens positive. On the back of the QuickStart Guide are some guided responses to frequently asked client questions. We recommend that you keep this QuickStart Guide handy when enrolling clients or participants in your programs, and incorporate the screening questions into your program's intake process, which can be done using the included laminated screening questions page, which can be presented to clients with a dry-erase marker for completion.

Also included in this toolkit is a factsheet about food insecurity in Montgomery County, an overview of Maryland's Food Supplement Program (FSP or SNAP), and two community education resources prepared by the Protecting Immigrant Families Campaign on how the proposed change to the rule on "Public Charge" affects our immigrant population. Just as in the QuickStart Guide, there is a chart explaining how the rule affects people (or not) according to their immigration status.

Last but not least, the toolkit contains an expanded list of County resources that address many different basic needs, from food to transportation, financial literacy, housing and child/youth services. We at the Montgomery County Food Council hope that you find this Screen & Intervene Toolkit useful in connecting your clients to the different programs and services that exist to help meet their needs.

For more information, please contact Amanda Neshar, Food Security Programs Manager at the Montgomery County Food Council at [aneshar@mocofoodcouncil.org](mailto:aneshar@mocofoodcouncil.org)

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[Food Supplement Program \(FSP\) Fact Sheet](#)

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[Public Charge Flow Chart](#)

[Public Charge Rule Change FAQs](#)

[Montgomery County Basic Needs Resource List](#)

