

Eight Myths About Hunger

adapted from <http://www.startasoupkitchen.org/news/myths-about-hunger.html>

#1: Hunger in America is a myth. Hunger in Boulder County is a myth.

Reality: Food insecurity (lack of consistent access to nutritious food) afflicts 50 million Americans. In Boulder County about 40,500 individuals, including 10,630 children, lack food security. (The Colorado average is 12.9%.)

A good economy is part of the problem. As home prices and rents increase, more families struggle to fulfill basic needs. “Typically higher-paid jobs create lower-paying jobs,” said State Demographer Elizabeth Garner. Those on the bottom end of the income ladder struggle. More families are applying for food stamps (SNAP) now than they were during the Great Recession.

In its 2017 TRENDS report, the Community Foundation estimates about one-quarter of Boulder County children are obese, a form of malnutrition. Diet quality can be improved by reducing the consumption of energy-dense foods, such as those high in fat and sugars, and by increasing the intake of dietary fiber. BVSD has removed a lot of sugary, fatty, salty junk foods from school lunches.

Myth #2: People are hungry because they are too lazy to work.

Reality: A significant number are the working poor. *Hunger isn't only about food. It's also about jobs and wages.* According to the USDA, the fastest growing demographic among SNAP recipients are people who because of their low wages had to apply for food stamps to feed their families.

Myth #3: People receiving emergency food assistance need help because they have too many kids.

Reality: No. Most families seeking assistance consist of 2–3 people, usually a mom and one or two children (average household size is 2.2 individuals). Only 3% of households have more than six members. According to Feeding America, 52% of client households are single-person households.

Myth #4: All poor people get SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistant Program, formerly “food stamps”) benefits.

Reality: Nationwide roughly a quarter of Americans eligible for SNAP don't sign up; they don't know they are eligible, they cannot navigate the system, or they want to avoid the stigma. Only 40 percent of eligible seniors are participating. Half of all SNAP benefits go to children.

Myth #5: SNAP is rife with fraud and abuse.

Reality: The accuracy rate for SNAP is very high - 96.58% in FY 2013.

Myth #6: People on SNAP just need to get a job

Reality: SNAP provides a vital lifeline so that people and their families can eat while they search for a job. The program is designed to expand and contract in relation to the rise and fall in unemployment. Approximately 40% of households receiving SNAP benefits have at least one working person.

Myth #7: Undocumented immigrants are eligible for SNAP benefits.

Reality: Not true. Additionally, there is a five-year waiting period for documented immigrants. Only 4% of SNAP participants are non-citizens (documented immigrants or refugees).

Myth #8: There is nothing we can do to help those who are hungry.

Reality: There's plenty we can do. Volunteer, donate cash, or collect food requested by local hunger relief organizations. Help at a soup kitchen. Call your Congressional reps and urge them to oppose cuts in SNAP benefits. Advocate for living-wage laws.

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