

# Senior Food Insecurity in Alaska:

What We Know and How We Know It

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Food Bank of Alaska



# What We Will Cover Today

- Food Insecurity definitions and data, causes and correlations
- Changing Face of Hunger – client demographics
- Programs available to address hunger in Alaska



# Food Insecurity Defined

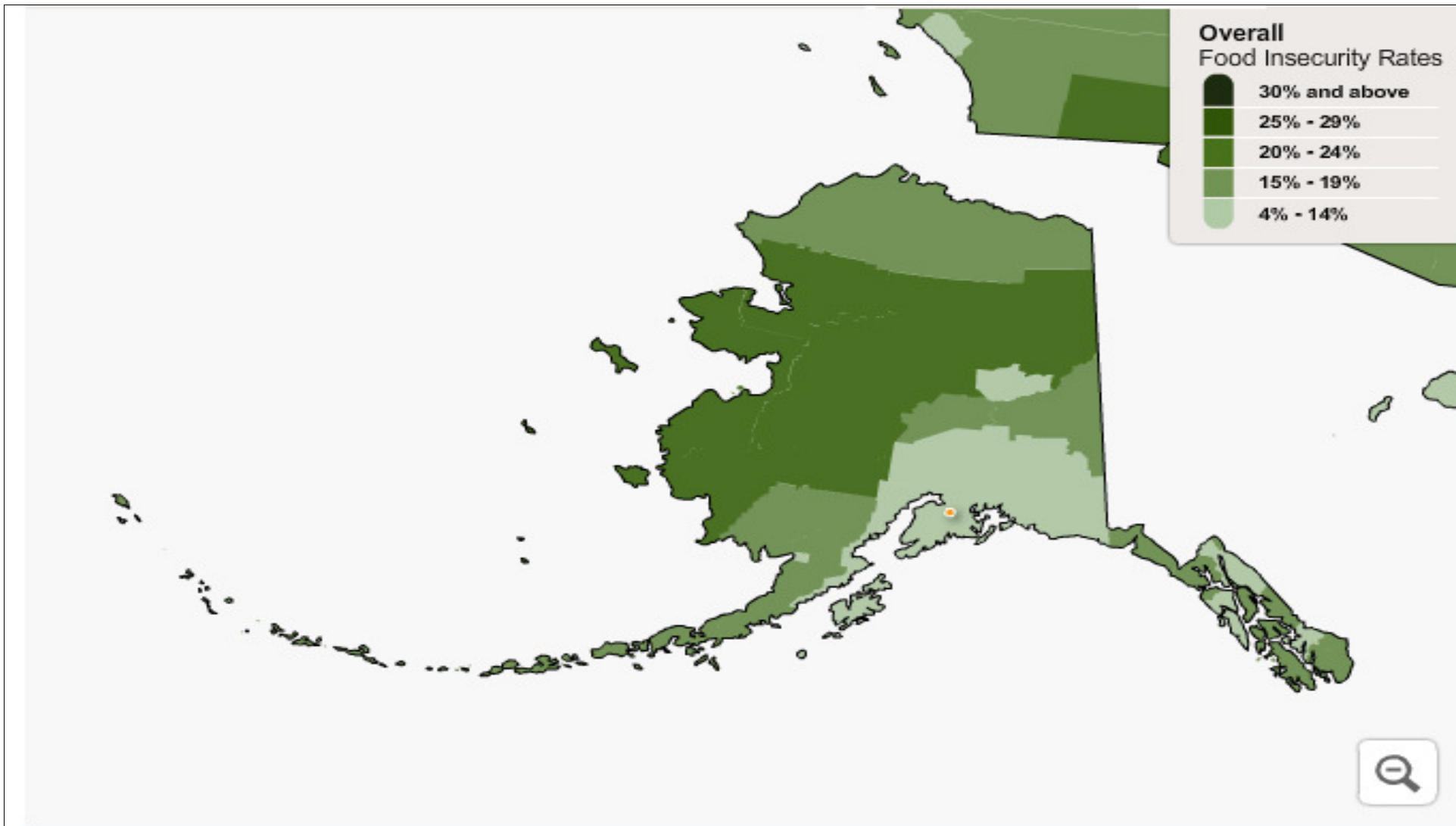
- Food insecurity, defined as the inability to access sufficient, safe, and nutritious foods in socially acceptable ways
- Higher in low-income population, but not restricted to low-income



# Map the Meal Gap

- 102,180 Alaskans, or 14%, are food insecure
- 36,650 or 19.6% of Alaskan children are food insecure





## Alaska



**OVERALL**  
food insecurity rate



Food insecure people  
**102,180**

**Estimated program eligibility among food insecure people:**



**45%** below SNAP threshold of 130% poverty

**18%** between 130-185% poverty

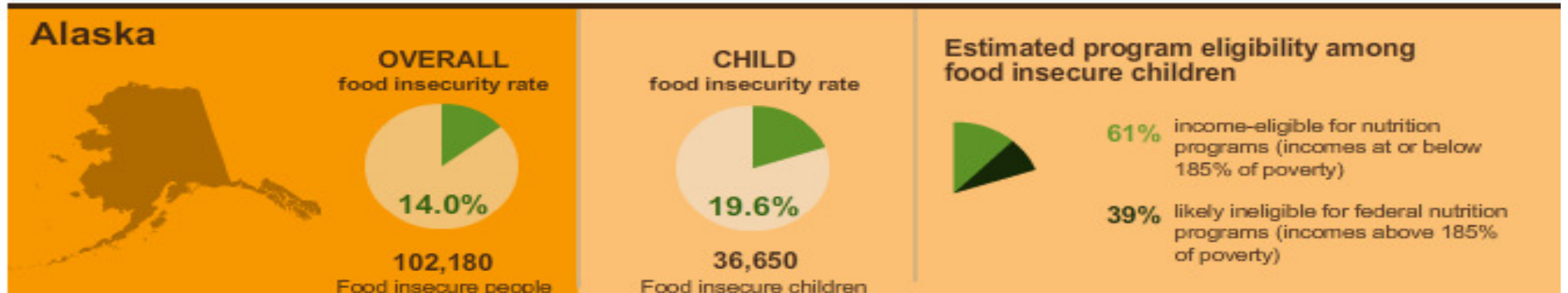
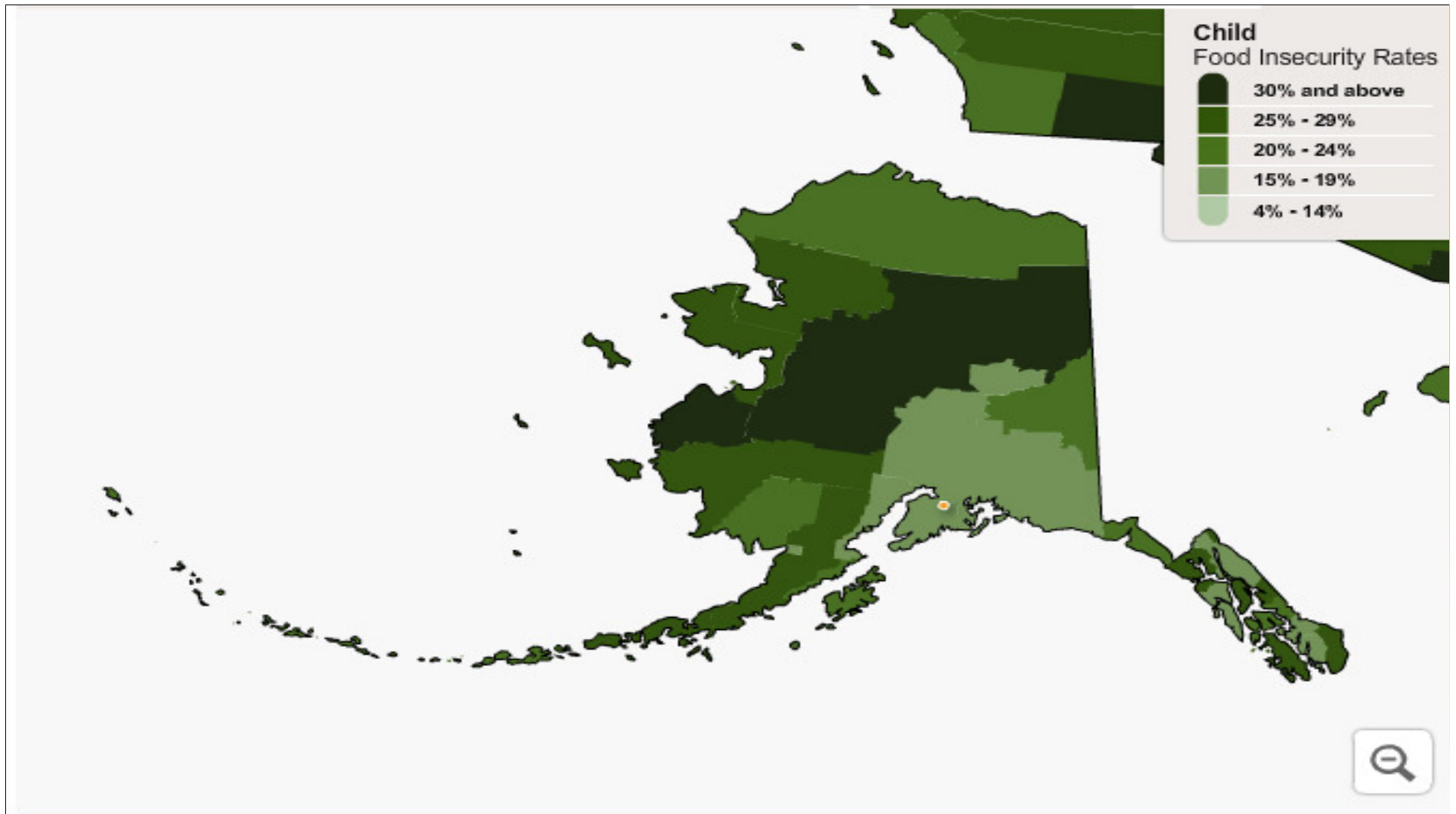
**37%** above Other Nutrition Program threshold of 185% poverty

Additional money required to meet food needs in 2012

**\$55,653,000**

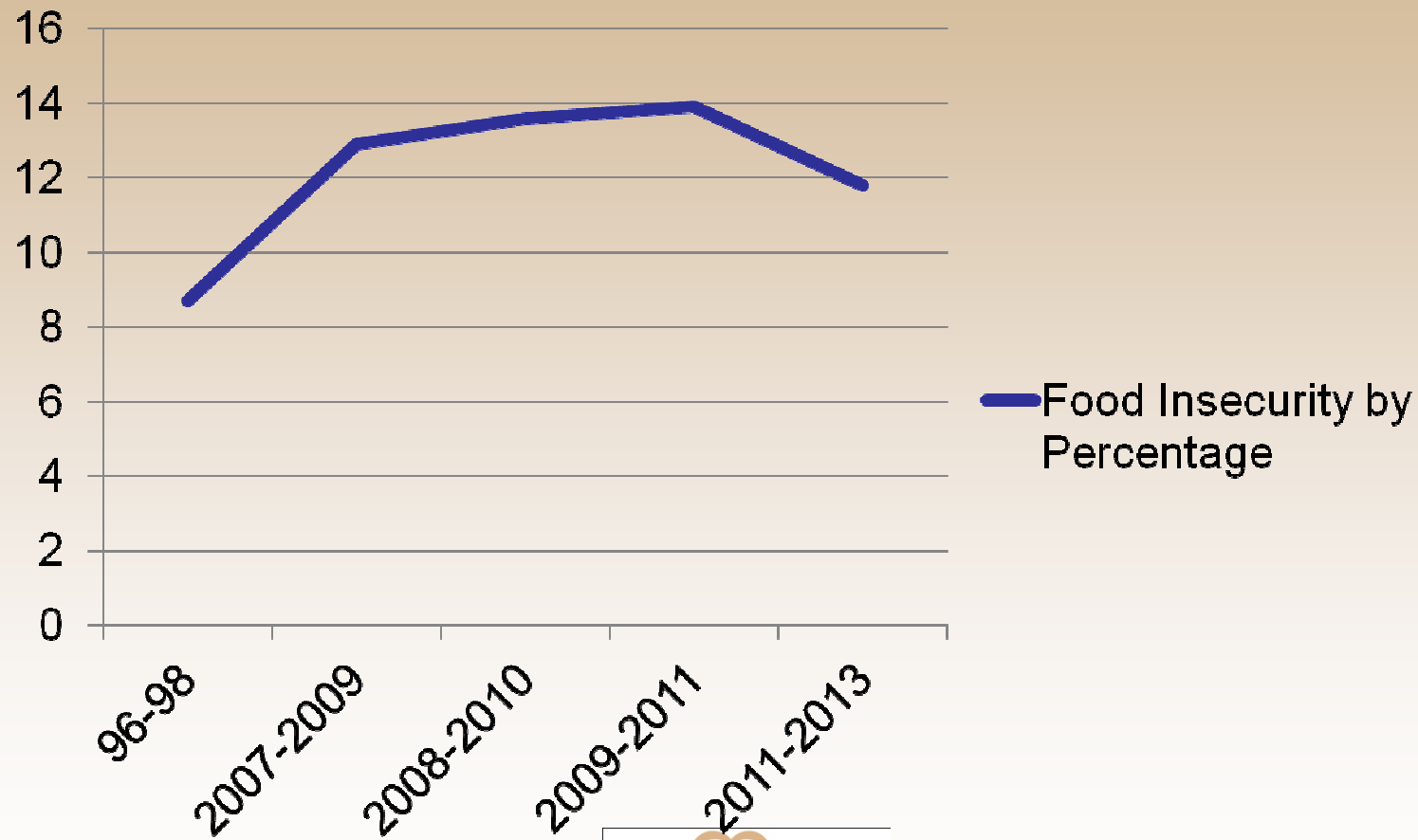
Average cost of a meal:

 **\$3.11**



# Household Food Security Study

## Food Insecurity by Percentage



<http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/1565415/err173.pdf>



# Food Hardship

- Asks one question “Have there been times in the last twelve months when you did not have enough money to buy food that you or your family needed?”
- 19.2% of Alaskans answered yes, up 1% since the 2011 study
- We rank 23<sup>rd</sup> for food hardship rates in the nation





# BRFSS

- Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System
- Phone survey conducted biennially by State of Alaska (and most states)
- Intended to learn about behavior that leads to health risks, like smoking



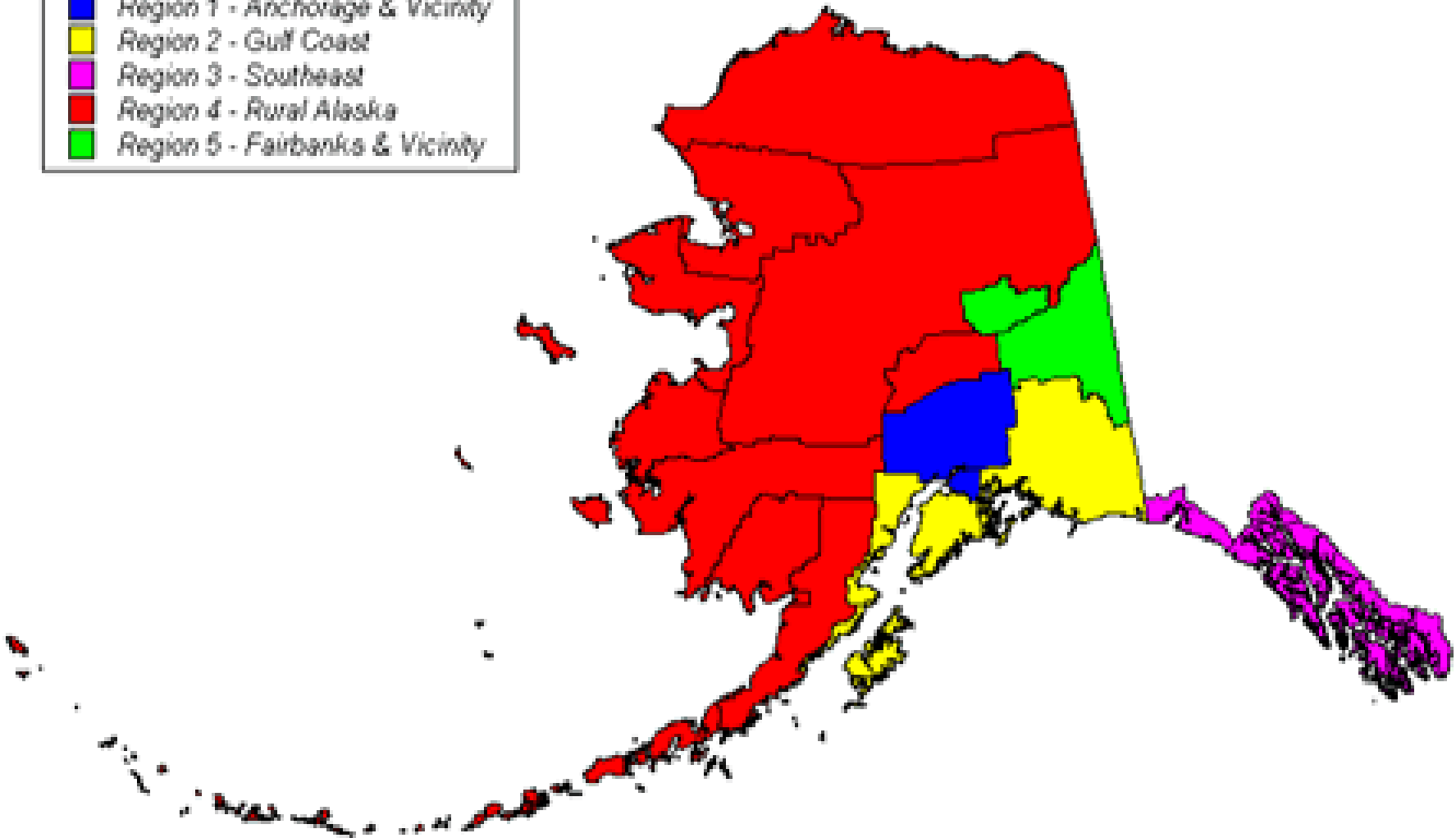
# BRFSS

- Alaska WIC paid to add a selection of the Household Food Security Study questions to BRFSS in 2006
- The idea was to get a more granular sense of the 'universe of need' – broken down by region in the state



# BRFSS Regions in Alaska

- Region 1 - Anchorage & Vicinity
- Region 2 - Gulf Coast
- Region 3 - Southeast
- Region 4 - Rural Alaska
- Region 5 - Fairbanks & Vicinity



Source: State of Alaska, Dept. of HSS, Division of Public Health, CHBS Unit



# BRFSS

	% of Food Insecure Adults	% of Food Insecure Children
Alaska	11 %	15 %
Anchorage	10 %	15 %
Gulf Coast	11 %	14 %
Southeast	7 %	9 %
Rural	20 %	24 %
Fairbanks	9 %	14 %



# 2014 Hunger Study

- Coordinated by Feeding America
- Alaska Food Coalition and FBA staff and volunteers conducted in-person interviews of 619 Alaskans in spring 2012-2013
- Interviews conducted in a random sample of communities statewide
- Conducted 77 program visits in network
- Surveyed 194 partner agencies



# 2014 Hunger Study

- Aims to learn who is seeking food assistance – demographic information on current clients and certain information about programs offered in our network
- Best source of data on the details of who is hungry in Alaska



# 2014 Hunger Study – Changing Face of Hunger

- Who Are We Serving? 1 in 5 Alaskans turn to our network for help each year.  
Including:
  - 154,900 Alaskans served annually (or 63,200 households); 21,200 unique clients in a typical week (or 7,700 households).
  - 32% children under 18
  - **13% seniors aged 60 and older (20,137)**



# Changing Face of Hunger

- 60.3% worked for pay in last 12 months
  - 43% worked for pay in last four weeks. More likely to work part time
- **21% of households are retired** and 69% of households cannot work due to disability.
  - **11% of households include grandparents** who have responsibility for grandchildren who live with them







# Hungry People Are Faced With Difficult Choices

- 64% making choices between food/transportation
- 56% making choices between **medications/meals**
- 53% making choices between housing/food
- 59% making choices between utilities/food



# Health of Clients

- 26% of households reports at least one member with diabetes
- 47% have high blood pressure
- 34% have no health insurance
- 56% have unpaid medical bills



# Income of Clients

- 53% of clients served have incomes that are at or below the federal poverty level (\$15,510 or less for household of two)
- 27% have incomes between \$1-\$10,000 annually; 29% have incomes of \$10,001-\$20,000 annually



# 100% of Poverty Line

<b>Family or Household</b>	<b>Alaska</b>
1	\$14,580
2	\$19,660
3	\$24,740
4	\$29,820



# Education of Clients

- 7% have an adult student in the home
- 87% of all clients have attained a high school degree or GED or more, 35% of all clients have post-high school education (including license or certification, some college or a four-year degree)



# Housing and Clients

- 12% of households own their home with a mortgage
- 60% rent or lease
- 88% of clients live in non-temporary housing/”stable” housing
  - 17% starting living with another family in the past 12 months to make ends meet
  - 15% have faced eviction



# Housing Continued

- 7% of households do not have access to cooking facilities such as stove or hot plate
- 15% of households don't have access to place to preserve fresh food, such as a refrigerator







  
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# Hunger & SNAP

- 45% of households participate in SNAP but 26% report that their benefits last only one week or less; 30% report lasting two weeks; 25% report that benefits last for three weeks; and 19% report that benefits usually last four weeks or more.
- 20% of clients not participating in SNAP cite believing they are not eligible as reason for not participating



# SNAP and Seniors

- Seniors tend to feel a strong stigma against food stamps. See it as welfare.
- Strategies for outreach to seniors for SNAP
- Senior Benefits, a.k.a., “Longevity Bonus”



# Hunger & Top Desired Food

- Top three desired food items of clients reported was:
  - Dairy products such as milk, cheese, or yogurt (29%);
  - fresh fruits and vegetables (53%);
  - protein food items like meats (54%)



# Client Coping Strategies

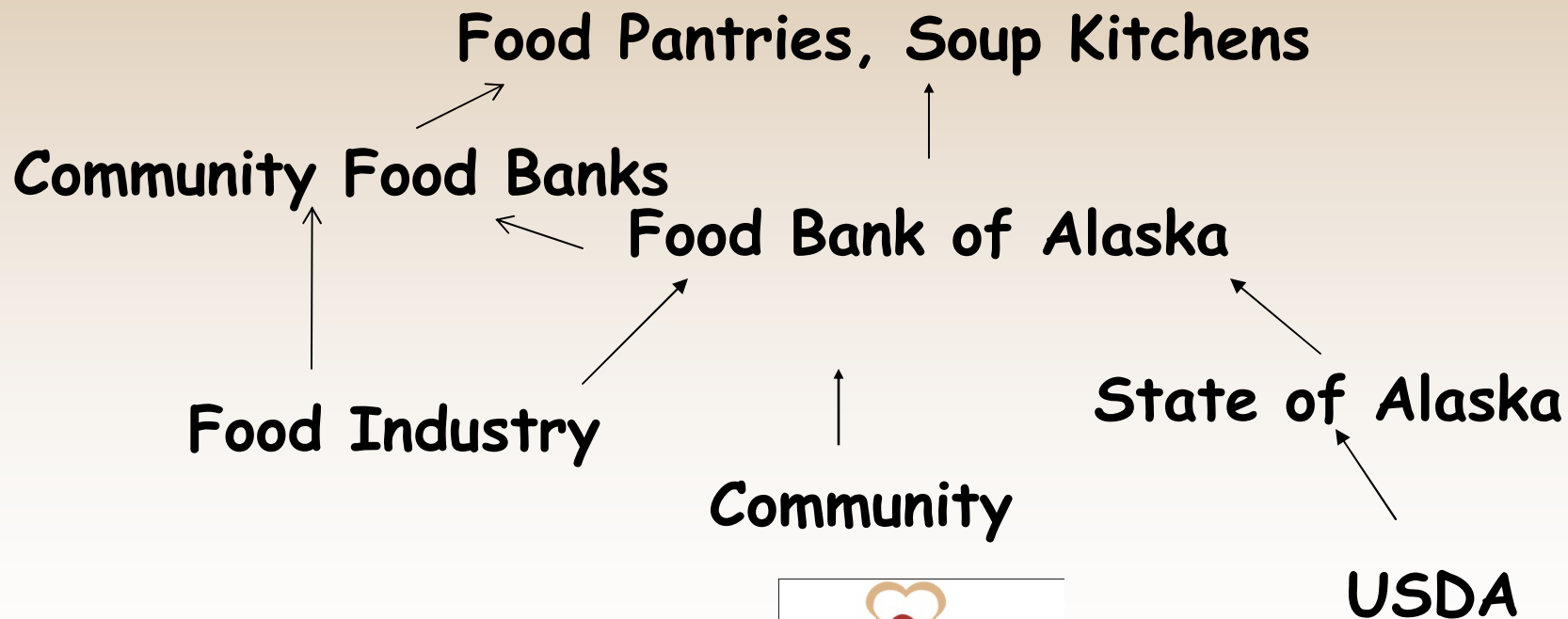
- Eaten food past expiration date – 71%
- Grew food in garden – 18%
- Purchased food in dented or damaged packages - 57%
- Purchased inexpensive, unhealthy food – 81%
- Received help from family or friends – 54%
- Sold or pawned personal property – 29%
- Watered down food or drinks – 37%



# FBA Partner Agency Network



# Charitable Anti-Hunger System



# How Families Get Help

- Charitable efforts – soup kitchens, food pantries, senior centers, faith based congregations, summer camps, Mobile Food Pantry, etc.
  - Call Alaska 2-1-1
- FBA distributed nearly 7 million pounds of food in FY13 through the charitable food network around Alaska.





# Agencies in our Network

- Meal Programs make up 19.5% of network and Grocery programs make up 80.5%
- 50% are faith based
- 64% of agencies report employing paid staff. The median number of paid FTEs was 5; however, Average agency relies on multiple part-time individuals to make up one full time position.



# Agencies in our Network

- Volunteer work force is used, & the median number of volunteers assisting at programs in a typical week is 5, giving a median of 19 volunteer hours each week.
- 8% of volunteers are age 18 or younger
- 64% of volunteers are between 19-59 years old, and **28% are age 60 or older.**



# Food Need and Sources of our Network Partners

- 37% of agencies report having somewhat less or a lot less food than needed to meet clients' needs.
- Average percentage of total food distributed by food programs in the past 12 months by source:
  - 51.8% came from FBA
  - 13.5% donations
  - 31.0% purchased
  - 3.6% other



# Some Charitable Child Nutrition Programs

- KNN – Knowledge Needs Nutrition
- Back Pack Buddies – Faith Christian
- The Children’s Lunchbox, weekend food program
- Dare to Care
- Schools Foundation



# Food Assistance Programs: How Families Get Help

- School Meals

About 44% of all school children in Alaska qualify for free or reduced price meals

- After School Meals (CACFP)

- 15 rural communities

- Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

- 55 rural communities serving over 65,000 meals



# When School is Out

- Two USDA programs –  
Child and Adult Care Food Program

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Alaska CACFP Specialist

[annmarie.martin@alaska.gov](mailto:annmarie.martin@alaska.gov)

## Summer Food Service Program

Veronica Lietz

Alaska SFSP Specialist

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<http://education.alaska.gov/tls/cnp>





  
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# Summer Food Service Program

- A reimbursement program for meals served to children under age 19 during the summer
- Meals must meet USDA meal pattern requirements
- **USDA is seeking feedback about elders** served on this program and considering making changes to program to feed seniors





# Key Players

- USDA – sets the rules
- State of Alaska – administers the rules
- Sponsor – takes legal responsibility and maintains paperwork
- Site – provides meals to kids



# Food Flexibility

- Self-prep – make food on-site
- Vended – purchase food from someone else, hot or cold
- Pre-packed – shelf-stable ‘lunch-able’ type meals



# Some of the Headaches

- Not all sites qualify – they have to be located in a low-income area or take income applications
- Sites must be monitored at least three times during the summer
- Paperwork



# Getting Creative

- Unusual sites – DPA offices, Food Pantry of Wasilla, libraries
- Using local monitors for rural sites



# FBA SFSP Site, Holy Cross



July 26, 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a grandmother of two children ages 7 and 8. While at the library, time does move fast, and the children get hungry. Most times I have to gather our things, and leave the library. One day I overheard other children talking about how the library feeds you. Their voices were loud with excitement. I investigated the information and found that indeed, the Mountain View Library have a luncheon program.

I took my grandchildren to the area where the library serves the children their meal and I watched the children that were so excited about the food. I saw how hungry two of those children were. I knew the lunch was their first meal that day.

I write this letter of appreciation, for all the children in our state that are now able to have a meal, through your program.

I find the program to be beneficial in other ways as well. Children are able to interact with their peers, and participate in other educational activities that they may not have even come to the library for, if a meal was not provided.

My grandchildren as well as others are enjoying a fun, safe, and educational environment.

Moreover, I have never witness any library staffers or volunteers making anyone feel less than a person because they are participating in their luncheon program.

The Library Luncheon Program ROCKS.

Thank You

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan R. Zuber". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "S".

# Bigger SFSP Sponsors

- Food Bank of Alaska
- The Children's Lunchbox
- Campfire USA Alaska Council
- Grandview Baptist Church
- Boys and Girls Club



# Other Programs

- Food Stamps/SNAP – 91,000 in FY13 (1 in 8 people)
- WIC – 23, 055 in FY13
- TANF – 3,352 (not including tribal providers)
- Senior Benefits
- Adult Public Assistance





# Food Stamps/SNAP

- Largest federal nutrition program
- 91,000 Alaskans participated in FFY2013
- Average benefit per person is \$170.07 per month
- Average benefit per family is \$414 per month



# Food Stamps/SNAP Cont'd.

- Benefits are placed on a debit card and can only be used to purchase food
- Food Stamp benefits don't last through the month
- 76% of SNAP households contain a child, **senior**, or disabled member, and 84% of all benefits go to these households



# Senior Benefits

- Pays cash benefits to Alaskan seniors who are age 65 or older and have low to moderate income.
- Cash payments are \$125, \$175, or \$250 each month depending on income.
- The income limits for each payment level are tied to the Alaska Federal Poverty Guidelines and change each year as the poverty level changes.



# Adult Public Assistance

- Alaska's Adult Public Assistance (APA) program provides cash assistance to needy aged, blind, and disabled Alaskans to help them remain independent.
- The APA program gives cash to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients and others who have income and resources within APA income and resource limits.
- APA recipients are also eligible for Medicaid benefits.



# Adult Public Assistance

- A person who is not blind or disabled must be at least 65 years old.
- A person who is blind or disabled must be at least 18 years old.
- Must be a resident of Alaska
- Must meet income eligibility guidelines
- **Resources may not exceed \$2,000 for an individual or \$3,000 for a couple.**



# Other Food Programs at Food Bank of Alaska

- CSFP – Commodity Supplemental Food Program
- Administered by the State of Alaska, Department of Health & Social Services
- Distributes nutritious foods to low-income seniors, pregnant or postpartum women and children up to their 6<sup>th</sup> birthday that are not on WIC



# APA limits

- A person must apply for and pursue any other benefits for which he or she appears eligible. Such benefits include: federal SSI benefits, private and public sector pensions and annuities, Social Security Insurance benefits, Unemployment Insurance, Department of Veterans Affairs pension and compensation benefits, Workers' Compensation, and other disability benefits.



# APA & Sr Benefits Contacts

- Adult Public Assistance E-mail DPA Policy:

[dpapolicy@alaska.gov](mailto:dpapolicy@alaska.gov)

Phone: (907) 465-3347 Fax: (907) 465-5254 Address: PO Box 110640 Juneau, AK 99811-0640

- Senior Benefits Office 855 W. Commercial Drive, Wasilla, AK 99654 Phone: 1-888-352-4150 or 352-4150; Fax: 357-2561, toll-free 1-866-352-8539

– <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dpa/Pages/seniorbenefits/default.aspx>





# Other Programs - CSFP

- CSFP food boxes are available once a month to eligible senior clients.
- Different eligibility requirements for each group
- There are currently 19 FBA affiliated CSFP distribution agencies throughout Kodiak, Anchorage, the Mat-Su Valley and Southeast (does not include KPFB's agencies +5)



# CSFP Cont'd

- Must meet federal income guidelines for eligibility
- Must be age 60 or older
- Income is self verified
- Can use proxy to pick up their boxes
- Some home delivery options available (limited)



# CSFP Limits

- Statewide caseload set by USDA – a little over 2,100 for Alaska
- Administrative dollars don't fully cover cost of operation let alone storage or distribution of food to rural AK.
- Currently on a waitlist. About 400 on the waitlist
- Many federal rules around participation



# Other Programs - TEFAP

- TEFAP – The Emergency Food Assistance Program
- Administered by the State of Alaska, Department of Education & Early Development
- Provides a once a month food allotment of USDA foods to eligible low-income households



# Other Programs – TEFAP Cont'd

- Income based eligibility
- Households must go through a TEFAP distribution agency to participate in the program
- There are currently 44 FBA affiliated TEFAP distribution agencies throughout Alaska (does not include KPFB (+2) and FCFB agencies)



# Other Programs - FDPIR

- FDPIR
- Provides a once a month allotment of USDA foods to eligible low-income households living in Alaska villages with fewer than 10,000 people.
- Administered by ANTHC



# Other Programs – FDPIR Cont'd

- Households must go through an FDPIR distribution agency in their village to participate in the program.
- Households cannot participate in FDPIR and Food Stamps at the same time
- There are currently 19 FDPIR distribution agencies in rural Alaska



# Other Resources – Meals on Wheels

- Meals on Wheels - operated by Salvation Army – Older Alaskans Program in Anchorage and by Homer Senior Citizens, Inc. in Homer
  - For some Anchorage and Homer seniors, daily home-delivery of hot meals, with frozen meals for the weekends and holidays
  - Each meal contains one-third of the required daily allowances for nutrition.





# Meals on Wheels, Cont'd.

- Program eligibility guidelines:
  - 60 or older
  - Physically limited in ability to independently carry out normal activities of daily living.
  - **Financial resources are not a consideration for eligibility.**



# Other Resources – Congregate Meals

- Some senior centers, medical centers, treatment centers, adult day care centers, faith based organizations etc. supply congregate meals.
  - We refer seniors to call Alaska 2-1-1 for information on current food assistance networks accepting referrals



# Subsistence and Seniors

- In rural Alaska senior hunger may have its most powerful impact
- Physically demanding hunting, fishing, gathering
- Often no other food assistance resources such as pantries, TEFAP, CSFP, FDPIR, grocery stores, meals on wheels etc.
- Biggest challenge



# Concluding Thoughts

- Federal nutrition assistance programs are critical in helping to feed hungry Alaskans and have been shown to improve food security for low income people.
- Kids who have access to enough healthy, balanced meals perform better in school



# Concluding Thoughts

- Nutrition programs help free up resources for seniors and families so they don't have to choose between food and meds or rent or heating fuel.
- Programs that help reduce poverty and improve low income neighborhoods to increase access to healthy, affordable foods and more opportunities to be physically active have an important part of a healthy Alaska!



# What Can You Do?

- **Charities, individuals, and government all have a role to play. Please consider giving:**
  - **Funds & Food – for every dollar we can buy 4 meals**
  - **Voice – Advocacy on food policy**
  - **Time - Volunteer**



# Thank you!

Mary Sullivan, MSW

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