



**BUILDING LIFE SKILLS**



**CONNECTING TO RESOURCES**



**NUTRITION EDUCATION**

**Lincoln County Health Department  
June 2017**

# Food Security Report



**ACCESS TO FOOD SECURITY  
IN LINCOLN COUNTY**

## Introduction

Access to enough food for an active and healthy life by all people at all times is necessary for a community to reach is the definition food security. According to recent data, approximately 12% of all Lincoln County residents received FoodShare assistance in 2016 (Wisconsin Department of Health Services FoodShare Data). This is comparable to Wisconsin's slightly higher rate of 13.3% in 2016 (Wisconsin Department of Health Services FoodShare Data). Despite successful initiatives, Lincoln County is not yet doing enough to create widespread food security.

To further explore issues surrounding food insecurity in the county, two meetings were held during the late spring of 2017. These meetings primarily focused on identifying food insecurity related issues and strategies to address them. In attendance were agencies that serve people who are food insecure, with some agencies sending multiple representatives and attending both meetings. In addition to discussing food insecurity issues attendees were evaluated on what new information they learned and how they intend to use it. Meetings were facilitated by Art Lersch, Community Resource Development Educator, UW-Extension-Lincoln County.

During the meetings, a wide variety of topics were discussed. This report provides a summary of the results of this process.

For a copy of the full report, visit  
<http://lincolncountyhealthdepartment.com/>

**Contents of this Report Summary provided by Art Lersch, Community Resource Development Educator, UW-Extension-Lincoln County.**

### Food Security Issues Presented in Lincoln County

**Access to Nutritional Foods:** Participants in both Merrill and Tomahawk focused the discussion on how a lack of nutritious foods contributes to food insecurity. It was stressed that there is a need to reconnect people to farmers markets and to work with food pantries to make healthier and perishable foods more available.

**Education:** Many participants commented on the importance of educating on resources like food pantries, FoodShare and WIC in order to dispel misconceptions. In addition, discussion focused on educating the proper preparation of nutritious foods and possibly reinstating home economics classes in schools.

**Access to Resources:** Participants alluded to making the many resources available in Lincoln County even more accessible by creating and maintaining a resource guide.

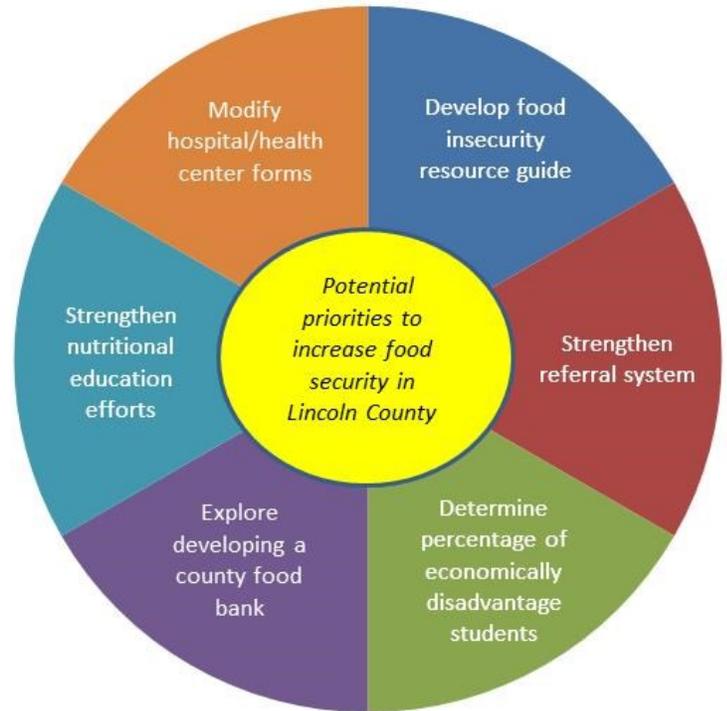
**Identifying Food Insecure Individuals:** Participants focused primarily on ways to improve identifying food insecure individuals in hospitals and schools in the county.

# Creating an Action Plan

## Identifying Priorities

A total of 20 community stakeholders and health professionals gathered in both Tomahawk (March 28, 2017) and Merrill (March 30, 2017) to engage in conversation about what is preventing Lincoln County residents from achieving food security.

Discussion in both meetings focused on identifying food insecurity related issues and how to address them. Four common themes of issues discussed were access to nutritional foods, education, access to resources and identifying food insecure individuals. Based on the issues presented, six potential priorities for 2017-2019 were identified, along with suggested strategies of approach.



### Priority 1:

#### Modify hospital/health center forms to better identify food insecure patients.

- Strategy—Ask Ascension officials how intake forms can be modified. If forms cannot be modified, determine what other methods can be used to better identify the food insecure. In addition, place information on where to find assistance in easy to find places on the Lincoln County Health Department website.

### Priority 2:

#### Develop and maintain food insecurity resource guide.

- Strategy—Identify point person from each agency that serves individuals that are food insecure to help identify and consolidate what information already exists. Determine where and how the guide should be distributed and pursue any funding needed.

### Priority 3:

#### Strengthen food insecurity assistance referral system.

- Strategy—Develop local food resource sheets and mobilize citizens to distribute information about food insecurity assistance programs.

### Priority 4:

#### Determine methods and suggest modifications if needed on how schools determine percentage of economically disadvantage students.

- Strategy—Work with school entities to obtain more accurate counts of economically disadvantaged students.

### Priority 5:

#### Explore the possibility of developing a county food bank.

- Strategy—Reconvene food security group and involve food pantries in the conversation. Create a hunger coalition if necessary.

### Priority 6:

#### Strengthen existing nutritional education efforts.

- Strategy—Complete and maintain a resource directory. Also, create uniformed educational talking points and distribute to various locations. Recruit school systems and hospitals to take part as well.

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