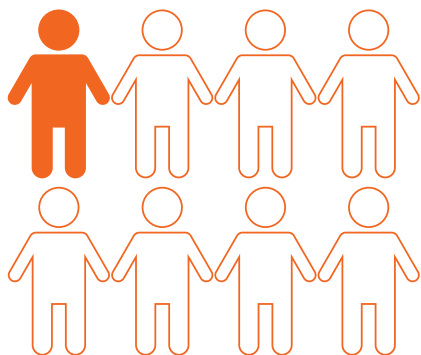


What Works for Kentucky Families Living in Rural Communities to get Enough Nutritious and Affordable Food?

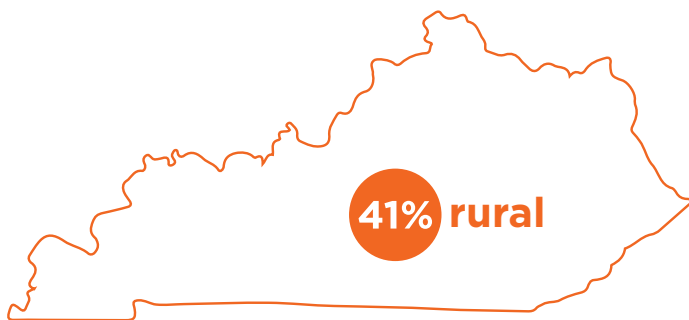
The **Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition (GSCN)** collaborated with **No Kid Hungry (NKH)** to lead a study in Arizona, Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, and Texas. Local practitioners and families in rural communities were asked to identify and rank policy, system, and environment (PSE) strategies that ensure families living in rural communities get enough nutritious and affordable food.¹ PSE strategies are important to create healthier and more equitable communities. This state brief focuses on Kentucky.

Hunger and Rurality in Kentucky

1 in 8 people in Kentucky face hunger²



1,860,980 people in Kentucky live in a rural area³



What are PSE Strategies?

- P** = **Policy**
Change is at legislative and organizational levels and include laws, ordinances, regulations, and rules.
- S** = **System**
Shifts are made in the way problems are solved within organizations, institutions, or communities.
- E** = **Environment**
Change is made in economic, social, and physical environments.



¹ Rural health information hub. Policy, systems, and environmental change. Available at: <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/health-promotion/2/strategies/policy-systems-environmental>.

² What hunger looks like in Kentucky. Available at: <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/kentucky>.

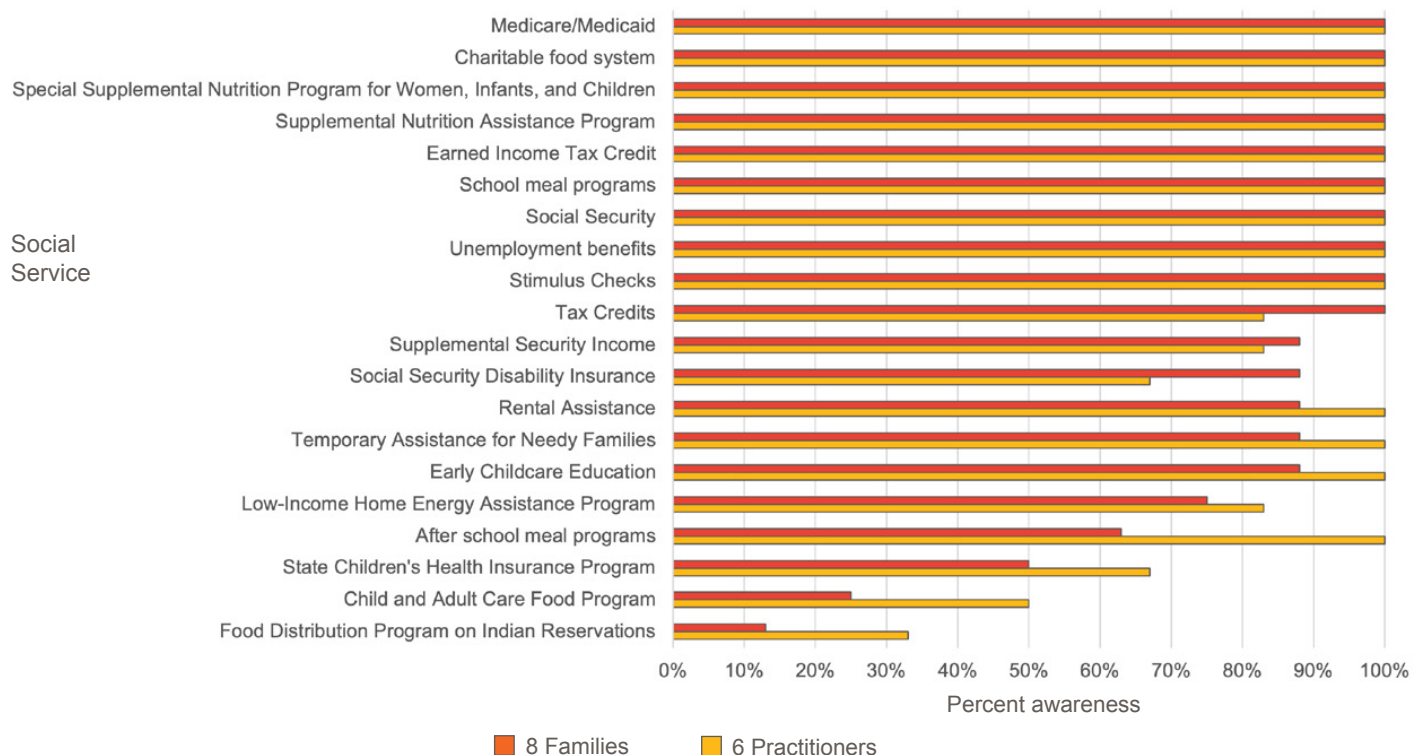
³ Rurality rates in Kentucky. Available at: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-areas/urban-rural.html>

Breakdown of Participation by Study Phases

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|--|---|--|
| Total Interviews | Total Surveys | Total Focus Group Participants |
| 30 Practitioners 42 Family participants | 8 No Kid Hungry (NKH) staff 12 Practitioners 26 Family participants | 7 NKH staff 5 Practitioners 10 Family participants |
| Kentucky Interviews | Kentucky Surveys | Kentucky Focus Group Participants |
| 6 Practitioners 8 Family participants | 3 Practitioners 3 Family participants | 1 Practitioner 1 Family participant |

Awareness of Social Services in Kentucky^{4,5}

During the interviews, Kentucky practitioners and family participants noted if they were aware of the following social services. Across programs, Kentucky practitioners had an average awareness of 88%, and family participants had an awareness of 83%. The programs with greatest awareness among family participants were food assistance programs, stimulus checks, healthcare programs like Medicare and Medicaid, and cash benefit programs. The programs with lowest awareness among family participants were food assistance programs that prioritize specific communities like FDPIR and CACFP.



⁴ Family participants met the eligibility criteria if they: had at least one child under age 18 in the household, lived in a rural place, and received support from at least one income-based social service were contacted for an interview.

⁵ Practitioners working in Kentucky were employed in food banks (2 participants), school nutrition (2 participants), community family resources (1 participant), and health care (1 participant). Family participants living in Kentucky self-reported race and ethnicity as Black (1 participant), more than one race (1 participant), and White (6 participants).

PSE Strategies for Rural Families to Get Enough Nutritious and Affordable Food

13 PSE strategies were co-developed from all interview participants. Beside those strategies, example quotes from practitioners and family participants in Kentucky are listed.

| Strategy | Example Quotes from Kentucky Participants |
|--|---|
| Make people more aware of the programs | "We hired a bilingual... she's helped people get bank accounts, she goes to doctor's appointments with them, sometimes she meets with employers and employees who can't communicate with each other." — <i>Practitioner</i> |
| Make it easier to sign-up | "People would come into our house office, and we tried to help them fill it out. That was a lot of work so I can see why people maybe didn't use it." — <i>Family participant</i> |
| Make it trouble free for people to use programs | "WIC is really hard to use. I have WIC... I went to visit my mom, and I couldn't buy anything that I've bought [at home]. It wasn't in their system." — <i>Family participant</i> |
| Chances for people to suggest changes | "...Whenever people qualify for food stamps... It's really hard whenever you get to their income limit...even though I'm not at their income limit, they only give me \$266 a month." — <i>Family participant</i> |
| Expand food banks (e.g. charitable food systems) | "[Food pantries are] absolutely not able to keep up with the demand." — <i>Practitioner</i> |
| Expand school nutrition programs | "[Having] reduced regulations on some of the meal programs [would be helpful]. Having non congregate feeding for the meal programs was very beneficial." — <i>Practitioner</i> |
| Provide more places to get food locally | "In Kentucky right now at the farmer's markets, you get like two for one. If you have food stamps, and you go buy \$20 worth of food stamps to use at the farmer's market, they'll give you \$40 worth of actual credit..." — <i>Practitioner</i> |
| Learn about buying and making healthy foods on a budget | "We do a lot of educational classes, like budgeting, we do meal prep, like family meal prep, heart healthy meal prep, diabetic, and low cholesterol meals." — <i>Practitioner</i> |
| More childcare options and early childhood education | "There's the bookmobile. It usually stops only at some of the subsidized housing complexes and it doesn't come around to some of the other neighborhoods." — <i>Practitioner</i> |
| Expand employment | "[If] they raised our minimum wage to \$10 an hour here [that would be helpful]. It's technically still \$7.25. That has also caused everybody to raise their rent, because they think people are bringing in more money." — <i>Family participant</i> |
| Increase access to affordable health care | "Mine and [my daughter's] medical cards are lifesavers. It is so nice to take her when I'm worried or for me to go... we've had COVID twice and it was so nice to go to urgent care and get another COVID test." — <i>Family participant</i> |
| Make housing more affordable | "Anything that can help relieve families from the cost of the bills that we have [would be helpful], like anything that would have to do with how much we're paying toward electric how much we're paying for our natural gas." — <i>Family participant</i> |
| Make it easier to get from place to place | "A lot of times transportation is a barrier between the person and getting to wherever they need to go. In our community transportation is not very widespread, it's not like we have a good public transit system..." — <i>Family participant</i> |

Support for PSE Strategies and Activities: Survey Results from All Study Participants

Very high support
 High support
 Moderate support
 Low support

| PSE Strategies and Activities ⁶ | Level of Support ⁷ |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Strategy: Make people more aware of services Activities: Advertising for these programs in creative ways such as through social media; advertising these programs in many locations in the community; local community members sharing how to sign up and use these programs; organizations employing bi-lingual staff members to tell people about programs. | High support |
| Strategy: Make it easier to sign up for programs Activities: Making sure there are local offices in rural communities where people can go to sign up for these programs; make program applications shorter; allow people to fill out one application that can be used for all of these programs | High support |
| Strategy: Make it trouble free for people to use programs Activities: Make it faster to start using these programs; change program rules for how people can use money or services; allow people to receive program services on the phone, video, or computer; make it easier to check out at grocery stores when using SNAP and WIC; make it easier to keep using and stay on these programs; make it easier for immigrants to use these programs; follow-up with families that are receiving programs | High support |
| Strategy: Provide chances for people to suggest changes to programs Activities: Offer ways for people to share their ideas for changes to policies; advocate for an increase in the amount of money that programs can give people; create more programs that help families after WIC ends when kids turn 6 years old | High support |
| Strategy: Expand food banks (e.g. charitable food systems) Activities: Open food banks for more hours; let people choose the foods they get at the food bank; provide more foods that give people from various cultures a “taste of home”; provide more foods that are good for food allergies or special diets like low sodium; increase funding for food banks; create food banks inside existing community spaces like churches, schools, health care clinics; build food banks in places that are easier to get to; provide more foods that are appealing | High support |
| Strategy: Expand school nutrition programs Activities: Serve more food during meals at school; provide free school lunch for all students; provide more places for school-age children to get meals; provide more school foods that give people from various cultures a “taste of home”; give leftover foods to students or food banks; make nutrition standards easier; create more summer free-food programs for school-age children; provide after school programs; provide more school supply drives; create more backpack programs that send kids home with food; teach nutrition and food skills to students at school | High support |
| Strategy: Provide more places to get food locally Activities: Start community gardens; let people donate meat from hunting to food banks; provide discounts at farmer’s markets; make the food at farmer’s markets less expensive; create mobile farmer’s markets; provide prescriptions for fruits and vegetables at health care clinics; work with food banks to offer fresh local foods | High support |
| Strategy: Provide options for people to learn about buying and making healthy foods on a budget Activities: Provide classes and resources in multiple languages; provide food skills classes online (website, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube); provide cooking classes; provide finance classes (budgeting, saving); provide food preservation classes (canning foods, freezing foods); provide food safety classes | Moderate support |
| Strategy: Make childcare options and early childhood education better fit the needs of families Activities: Provide bookmobiles and mobile libraries; provide free preschool; open more childcare locations; open childcare facilities for more hours | High support |
| Strategy: Expand employment Activities: Increase the minimum wage; create more job opportunities; provide people with more help when searching and applying for a job | High support |
| Strategy: Increase access to affordable health care Activities: Provide more health care options that cost less; provide mobile medical vans; provide more options for affordable mental health services | High support |
| Strategy: Make housing more affordable Activities: Provide help for paying for gas, electric, water, and other utilities; create limits on how much a family must pay for gas, electric, water, and other utilities; build more places to live that cost less | High support |
| Strategy: Make it easier to get from place to place Activities: Lower gas prices; provide free public transportation | High support |

⁶ This table displays the combined scores of acceptability (the likability of the strategy for your community), appropriateness (whether the strategy is a good match for the community), and feasibility (how possible is the strategy in the community).

⁷ Scores were calculated for overall acceptability, appropriateness, and feasibility and divided into levels of support: low (≤50%), moderate (51-67%), high (68-84%), and very high (≥85%).

Support for PSE Strategies and Activities: Focus Group Results from Kentucky Study Participants

“Our biggest issue I've seen with a lot of my families is the uploading the paperwork. They do not know how to do that. And that's the biggest thing. Technology, we're used to technology on our phone. Everybody doesn't have a computer. They don't have a laptop. Some people may not realize they can go to the library and do it. But still, it's hard for them to do them things because they don't know how to do it.”

— Family participant speaking English

“I think working with people to do some of the application process over the computer can help, or even I've filled out forms for the people, because one of my clients, she lost her food stamps... I think that that would make it easier for them if we could do that [have the participant complete part of the application]. They have the computer system for us to do that, but every time I log in for some reason, it won't let me upload documents. So, I can fill out their application for them, but then they have to follow up with the documents.”

— Practitioner

No Kid Hungry Programs Happening Across Kentucky

Kentucky NKH is a public-private partnership between No Kid Hungry and Feeding Kentucky working to ensure every Kentucky student has access to healthy meals through the following ways:

- 1 We provide funding, training, and technical assistance to school leaders, and food service teams increase access and participation in school breakfast.
- 2 We convene local and state partners and decisionmakers to work towards a shared goal of maximizing federal child nutrition programs.
- 3 We work with rural school districts and summer meal sponsors to support implementation and expansion of non-congregate summer meals.

Recommendations for Kentucky

Build Upon Kentucky's Assets

Activities to accomplish a PSE strategy will differ depending upon each rural community's needs, which should be determined by local residents and invested practitioners. During surveys, focus groups, and interviews, families and practitioners shared ideas about how to implement PSE strategies in Kentucky by building on assets that exist.

- 1 Leverage Kentucky's existing networks like food pantries, grocery stores, healthcare sites, and childcare facilities to implement PSE strategies
- 2 Make people more aware of services using current outreach initiatives like social media
- 3 Implement PSE strategies and activities in rural locations through partnerships and pop up locations to make it trouble free for people to use programs
- 4 Employ and fairly pay community members at local places that implement PSE strategies

Questions about the study? Contact Carmen at cbshanks@centerfornutrition.org