

## North Texas Food Bank – Feeding Children

### Meeting the Hunger Needs of Children in North Texas

In North Texas, 300,000 children are food insecure. This means 1 in 5 kids do not know from where their next meal will come. This is an increase from 241,350 children (1 in 6) in 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic has made services for feeding children more critical than ever.

The North Texas Food Bank helps to address child hunger through access to food at our partner agencies and mobile sites; SNAP and social services assistance; as well as our three direct [Child Programs](#): Food 4 Kids, School Pantry, and Summer Programming. Through our Child Programs, we work with schools and social service programs in our 13-county service area to distribute nutritious foods to kids in need throughout the school year and the summer months. Through our main program/Partner Agency network and our direct Child Programs, 35% of the individuals NTFB serves are children.

The NTFB Child Programs team works closely with the NTFB Nutrition Services to ensure we are providing children at every age with the proper nutrition. Child Programs also partners with our SSA team to provide schools with additional resources such as SNAP workshops and more.

In Fiscal Year 2021, the Food Bank provided access to 45.7 million meals to children across North Texas through its main program and its three direct Child Programs.

### The Need

#### *The Devastating Effects of Food Insecurity on Children*

While the effects of food insecurity can be harmful to anyone, they can be particularly devastating for children. According to Feeding America, food-insecure children:

- are sick more often and more likely to be hospitalized
- can incur developmental impairments that limit their physical, intellectual, and emotional development
- demonstrate poor performance in school with lower academic achievement

All these consequences prevent food-insecure children from reaching their full physical and educational potential.

### Child Food Insecurity Data\*

#### *Local*

The NTFB service area is 5<sup>th</sup> in the nation in the number of food insecure children. CHILD FOOD INSECURITY TOP 10 (based on the number of children):

1. Houston, TX (Houston Food Bank)
2. Los Angeles, CA (Los Angeles Regional Food Bank)
3. New York City (Food Bank For New York City)

4. New York City (City Harvest)
- 5. North Texas (North Texas Food Bank)**
6. Phoenix, AZ (St. Mary's Food Bank)
7. Mesa, AZ (United Food Bank)
8. South Florida (Feeding South Florida located in Broward County Florida)
9. Atlanta, GA (Atlanta Community Food Bank)
10. San Bernadino/Riverside, CA (Feeding America Riverside San Bernardino Counties)

Dallas County has the fifth-highest projected number of children living in food-insecure households in 2021 at 171K children (compared to 139,800 in 2019, also ranked #5).

#### *State*

- Texas has the 4th highest projected child food insecurity rate at 23.6% (this is up from 19.6% in 2017).
- Texas leads the nation in the highest projected number of children (not rates) who may experience food insecurity in 2021 with 1.7 million children (this is up from 1.45 million children in 2019 when we were also ranked No. 1).
- The state also leads the nation in the highest projected number of children (not rates) who may experience very low food security in 2021 with almost 480K children (We were ranked No. 1 in 2019 with 377K children.)

#### *National*

- Feeding America projects that nationwide 13 million children (1 in 6, 17.9%), may experience food insecurity in 2021. This is compared to 10.7 million children (1 in 7) who were food insecure in 2019.
- According to the *USDA Household Food Security in the United States in 2020* report released in September 2021, food insecurity remained mostly unchanged between 2019 and 2020. However, single-parent households (27.7% for single mothers) and households with young children (15.3%) had much higher rates of food insecurity in 2020 compared to 2019.

*\*According to Feeding America Food Insecurity Projections March 2021, unless otherwise noted*

### **Programs**

#### **Food 4 Kids**

School children on the free and reduced-price school meal program often face hunger at home when meals are not available on weekends.

Working with educators to identify chronically hungry kids, the Food 4 Kids (F4K) program provides backpacks full of nutritious, nonperishable, kid-friendly food to take home each Friday afternoon during the school year. F4K expanded into middle schools in FY21, and the program operates in more than 300 elementary and middle schools, serving up to 11,000 chronically hungry children each week. Participating elementary schools must have at least 50% of students qualifying for free or reduced-priced meals with middle schools having 40% or higher.

One change for FY22 is an additional resource to the program that school staff can order called "Bonus Bites." Bonus Bites provides schools with a bonus box filled with entirely donated kid-friendly and shelf-stable items. This supplemental box offers schools more snacks to give to the kids either throughout the week, instead of only on the weekends, or to supplement the regular backpacks, such as to accommodate allergies. Through this

initiative, the team is hoping that school staff will be equipped with bonus food resources to tackle food insecurity, aligning with the Food Bank's plan of "Food for Today, Hope for Tomorrow."

In our last fiscal year, NTFB provided access to more than 1.2M meals through Food 4 Kids.

### **Most Needed Items for Food 4 Kids**

The menu for F4K items is more restricted than most due to the nutritional requirements for the program. Some of the most important requirements/needed items to keep in mind are:

- All items **must be individual packages (with a nutrition label on the package)**
- All items **must be shelf-stable**
- All items **must have less than 15% daily value of 1) saturated fat, 2) sodium, 3) added sugars\***
- Items:
  - o Granola bars
  - o Crackers
  - o Trail Mix
  - o Peanut butter (**16 oz only**)
  - o Pop-top cans of fruit (**16 oz only**)
- Additional/optional guidance:
  - o All items must be kid-friendly, ready to eat, no-prep and no-cook needed
  - o No glass packaging

*\*If there is no % listed for added sugar, look for 0-8 grams added sugar. If no added sugar, look for 12g or less total sugar.*

### **School Pantry Program**

Enrolled students and their families can access non-perishable items, as well as fresh produce, through participating schools. Distribution occurs once a month, typically after school. Students who visit the school pantry leave with 20-25 pounds of shelf-stable food items and 15 pounds of produce, in addition to add-on items that may be available.

School Pantry Programs operate in schools with at least 90% of students qualifying for free/reduced meals that are in high-need zip codes. In our last fiscal year, NTFB provided access to more than 1.5M meals through the School Pantry Program. The School Pantry Program has shifted to a site-led model. This allows schools to run and staff the distributions themselves, allowing students to act as volunteers and alleviate the workload on NTFB staff members

Typically focused on elementary schools, in the 2020-21 school year, The School Pantry Program added three middle schools in the Dallas Independent School District, and in the 2021-22 school year, the program added four new middle school sites – all of which were in new school districts, including Garland ISD, Mesquite ISD, Grand Prairie ISD, and a charter school.

NTFB hopes to expand into more middle and high schools in both the Food 4 Kids and School Pantry programs in the future.

### **Summer Food Service Program**

NTFB works with summer partners to ensure year-round food assistance for students and families. NTFB strives to provide relevant and accessible programming, which includes extending school year programs (Food 4 Kids Backpack Program, School Pantry Program) into the summer months as needed and exploring innovative avenues to distribute weekend backpacks. NTFB continues to stay engaged with Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) providers in North Texas.

## Participating School Districts

For School Pantry:

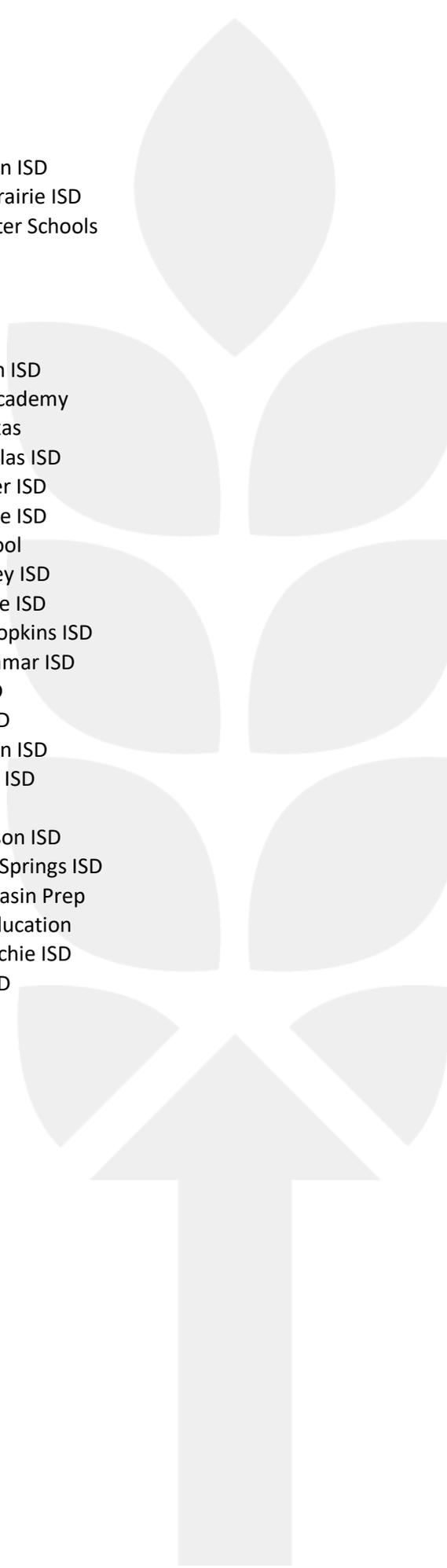
- Dallas ISD
- Garland ISD
- Mesquite ISD
- Plano ISD

For Food 4 Kids:

- Allen ISD
- Anna ISD
- APlus ISD
- Bonham ISD
- Blue Ridge ISD
- Caddo Mills ISD
- Carrollton Farmers Branch
- Cedar Hill ISD
- Chisum ISD
- Commerce ISD
- Como Pickton ISD
- Cooper ISD
- Crandall ISD
- Cumby ISD
- Dallas ISD
- Denton ISD
- Dodd City
- Duncanville ISD
- Ennis ISD
- Faith Family Academy
- Ferris ISD
- Garland ISD
- Gateway Charter Academy
- Grand Prairie ISD

- Princeton ISD
- Grand Prairie ISD
- A+ Charter Schools

- Italy ISD
- Kaufman ISD
- King's Academy
- KIPP Texas
- Lake Dallas ISD
- Lancaster ISD
- Lewisville ISD
- Life School
- McKinney ISD
- Mesquite ISD
- North Hopkins ISD
- North Lamar ISD
- Paris ISD
- Plano ISD
- Princeton ISD
- Red Oak ISD
- Rice ISD
- Richardson ISD
- Sulphur Springs ISD
- Trinity Basin Prep
- Uplift Education
- Waxahachie ISD
- Wylie ISD



## Client Profile Sidebars

### ***Alejandro and Brittany***

Brittany is a second-grader at one of the North Texas Food Bank's School Pantry sites in Dallas, and the COVID-19 pandemic impacted her family greatly after her father Alejandro's hours at work were reduced.

Since then, it has been challenging to get everything the family needs. The School Pantry program has been a big help for Alejandro and Brittany, providing shelf-stable items as well as fresh produce to help Alejandro provide healthy and well-balanced nourishment for his family.

Alejandro is grateful to find assistance at such a critical time, and he would say "thank you so much" to the school and everyone who supports the North Texas Food Bank for helping families during this time.



### ***Amye & Ava***



The School Pantry Program helps a single mother like Amye and her 8-year-old daughter Ava. "Hurt" is how Amye describes the pandemic's toll and how it's affected her family.

Amye relies on the food she receives from the North Texas Food Bank's School Pantry program to ensure Ava gets milk, greens, and other healthy produce she needs.

## Adimir & Family

Adimir has always worked hard to provide for his family. And with three kids under the age of 7, there are a lot of hungry mouths to feed.

Adimir was worried when the COVID-19 pandemic began. Almost overnight, he lost his source of income as an electrical contractor. He was faced with a scary question: Would he be able to afford to pay bills and feeding his family?

Thankfully, Adimir heard about one of the North Texas Food Bank's Pandemic Mobile Pantry distributions at Fair Park, where he was able to receive fresh produce, grains, and even a turkey. This assistance provides nourishment and peace of mind for this father.

"We have six members in our household, and the food you provide is more than enough. I'm just getting back on my feet. The food we receive helps us finish the week. It means a lot."



### General Quote from a School Pantry Family:

"The Food Bank has helped me and my family through hard times with what they put in the boxes. And for everything that is left over I give to [my other family members]. It has been a blessing to have this kind of help for my family."

### Quote from a F4K Site Coordinator (heading into winter break):

"What a wonderful program - I love that I can send our kids into a holiday with food. It gives me such peace of mind and I love it! Thank you for being such a blessing to our kids!"