



# We're listening. We're learning.

## FEEDING MI FAMILIES

*Families with lived experience of food insecurity have important, insightful, and creative perspectives on how to fight hunger.*

Feeding MI Families elevates the experiences, perspectives, and needs of Michigan families experiencing food insecurity and developed parent-driven recommendations to build more equitable and responsive nutrition assistance.

*“We seem stuck between a rock and a hard place. We make too much for government assistance but not enough to live.”*

*“We shouldn't have to be scared of a raise that won't balance out what I will lose in food assistance.”*

Feeding MI Families surveyed parents experiencing food insecurity from Detroit, Grand Rapids, Battle Creek, and Michigan's rural counties, regarding their use of and perspectives on food assistance. We then conducted in-depth interviews with parents, giving them the opportunity to identify solutions to food insecurity in Michigan.

### Participating Michigan Families 1,289

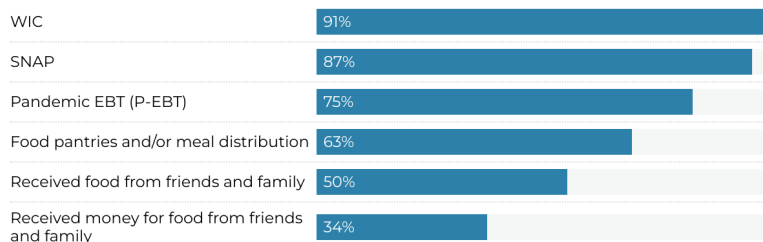
#### Who are our parents?

- 92% female
- 36 - average age
- 2.7 children per family
- 43% Black, 37% White, and 15% Latinx
- 7% born outside the US
- 7% experiencing homelessness
- 60% from Michigan cities  
Detroit, Grand Rapids, Battle Creek
- 40% from Michigan's rural counties

*All parents reported being worried that their family would run out of food.*

*80% have run out of food in the past year and couldn't buy more.*

#### Food Assistance Used by Families



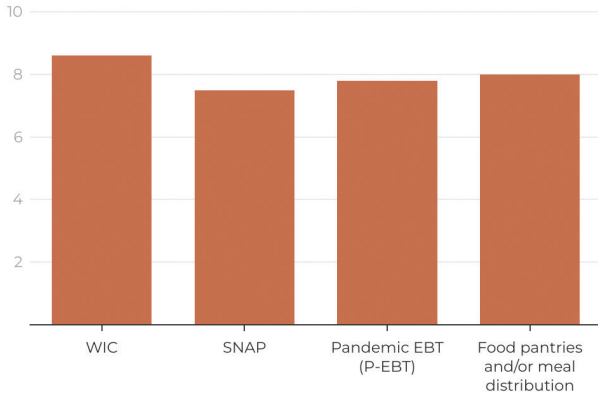
WIC: Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children; SNAP: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program



# Findings

## Satisfaction with Food Assistance

Parents were asked how satisfied they were with programs they had used on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high).



*“We only got a three-day supply worth of food [from the food pantry] and weren’t allowed to come back until a month later.”*

*“I’m a single mom who works full time. It’s hard to utilize many of the food resources due to their operating hours.”*

*“When you check out [at the grocery store], it displays on the screen that you’re using EBT for everyone behind you to see.”*

*“[Improve] the process to apply [for food assistance]. Not everyone is able to have access to a computer. It is hard to fill out on your phone and to talk with someone, it takes all day to get to the right point of contact. It is scary and intimidating.”*

## Experiences of Discrimination related to Food Assistance

Parents who report being discriminated against because they use food assistance

45%

Parents who worry about being mistreated by food assistance programs

37%

Parents born outside the US who worry using food assistance will affect their immigration status

45%

## Key Recommendations for Michigan Policymakers

### Stigma and discrimination are central barriers to food security.

- Invest resources to improve MI Bridges case worker/client interactions and ensure consistency in access to and high quality of case management.
- Support state and local agencies’ improvement of family food shopping experiences by making EBT cards more discreet and encouraging vendor use of clear and accurate product labeling.
- Encourage emergency food assistance to use best practices to reduce client stigma, including prioritizing privacy and food choice and minimizing documentation required from clients.

### Small modifications to programs make big differences to families.

- Eliminate state-specific requirements for SNAP eligibility; requirements increase administrative errors and create barriers to participation.
- Encourage use of state funding to buffer the “benefits cliff” by raising the income limits for SNAP eligibility and allowing families to continue to receive benefits during early months of new employment.
- Continue to support maximum administrative flexibility, including provision of remote services, in food assistance programming.

### Families want dignified access to fresh and safe produce, proteins, and dairy products.

- Invest in programs that provide small grocers access to high quality, lower priced local foods.
- Encourage state and local participation in nutrition incentive programs, like Double Up Food Bucks and other Food is Medicine programming that can provide low-income families medically-tailored and allergy-friendly foods.
- Encourage innovative improvements to supply chains to better link local emergency food assistance to fresh, Michigan food products.



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