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## **Food is Medicine**

**Jen Nelson, Seven Generations Ahead**

**Jennifer Herd, City of Chicago Department of  
Public Health**

**Jennifer M. Grenier, Loyola MacNeal  
Hospital**

**LOYOLA  
MEDICINE**



# Addressing SDOH During a Pandemic – Just say YES! SURPLUS PROJECT

Jennifer Grenier DNP, RN, CENP,  
Associate Chief Nursing Officer, Loyola MacNeal Hospital  
Regional Executive Director,

## sur·plus

(sûr'pləs, -plŭs') *adj* Being more than or in excess of what is needed or required:

surplus grain

**n. 1. An amount or quantity in excess of what is needed**





# Reflection



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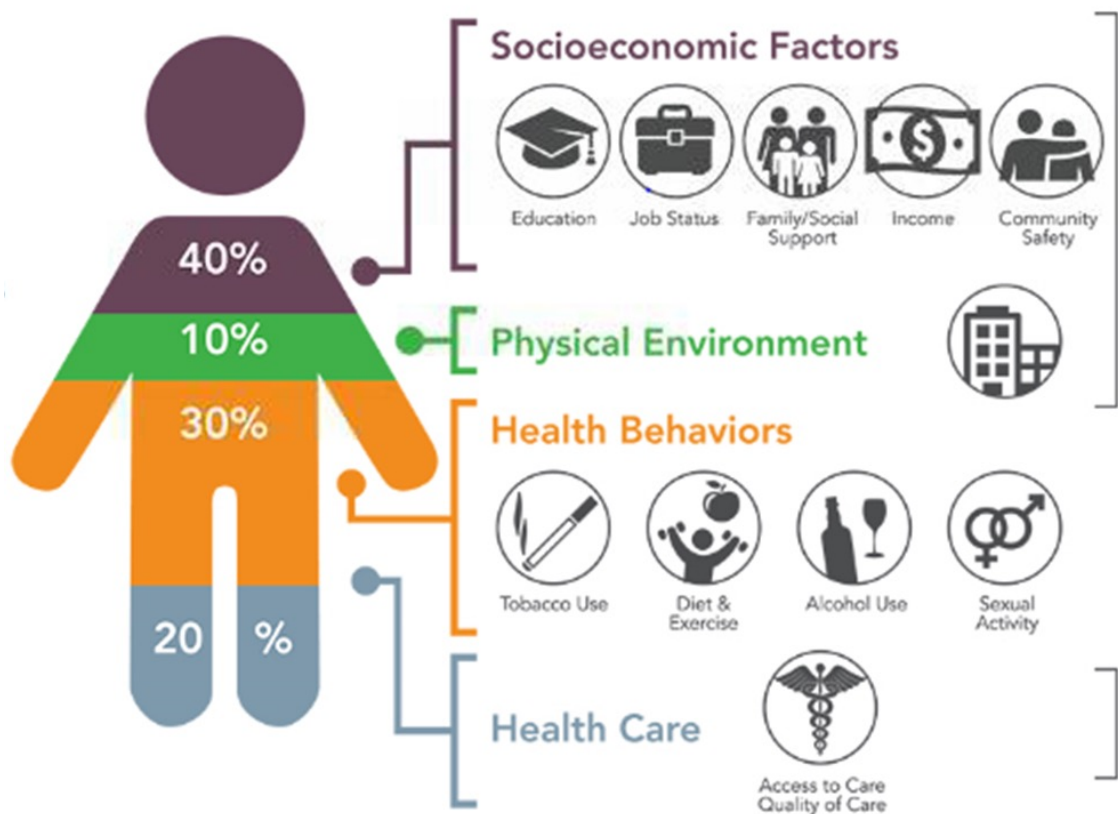
*“For I was hungry and you gave me food,  
I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was  
a stranger and you welcomed me.”*

• *Matthew 25:35*



# Social Determinants of Health

“Community: It’s where all this happens”.



# Current State in the U.S.

## FOOD WASTE IN THE U.S. IS...

### EXCESSIVE

**40%**

OF ALL FOOD PRODUCED  
IN THE U.S. IS WASTED



**133** BILLION  
POUNDS

Food wasted per year.  
That represents 1,249  
calories per person, per day.

### EXPENSIVE



**\$161** BILLION

Uneaten food at retailers,  
restaurants, and homes  
costs \$161 billion annually



**\$1,500**

Per capita, this amounts  
to over \$1,500 for a  
family of four

### ENVIRONMENTALLY HARMFUL



Food makes up 20%  
of landfill weight—the  
single largest municipal  
waste source



The methane  
released by food  
is a greenhouse  
gas 21 times more  
powerful than  
carbon dioxide

## AN OPPORTUNITY



Diverting 15% of the food  
that currently goes to  
waste would be enough  
to cut the number of food  
insecure Americans in half



Food waste can  
be composted into  
sustainable soil  
additives or be used  
to generate electricity



Encouraging institutions  
to purchase so-called  
“ugly” produce would help  
farmers find new markets  
for healthy products that  
currently go to waste



# The Why?



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- Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a 51% increase in food insecure households in Cook County, and specifically the West Side. This is equivalent to 270,000 people facing food insecurity in 2020 (Feeding America, 2020)
- West and South Chicago are at a much higher risk level of their households experiencing food insecurity due to socioeconomic, racial and community demographics (Hunt et al, 2019)
- Households that are food insecure have a 25% higher healthcare expenditures than households who are food secure and have greater healthcare utilization.
- Food insecure individuals are also 46% more likely to become a high-cost healthcare user in the future (Dean, French and Mortensen, 2020)



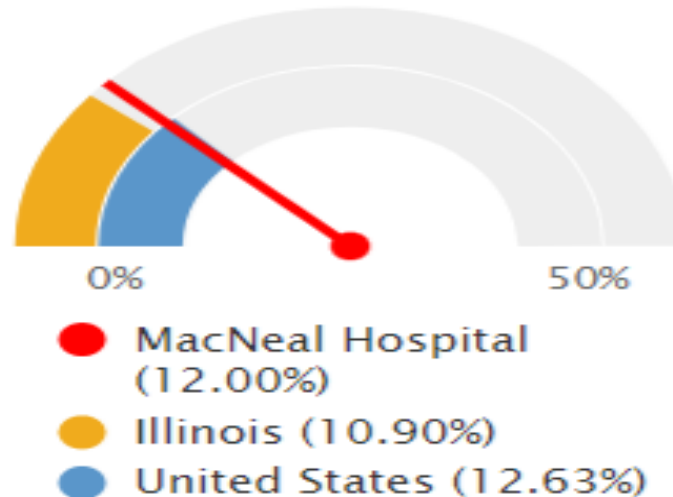
# The Why?



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- Many hospitals, ambulatory centers and catering departments generate a large amount of food waste
- Instead of generating food waste, the opportunity to repurpose the food to help those in needs helps to decrease costs for organizations. Landfills will get smaller and those who are hungry feel better.

Percentage of Total Population with Food Insecurity

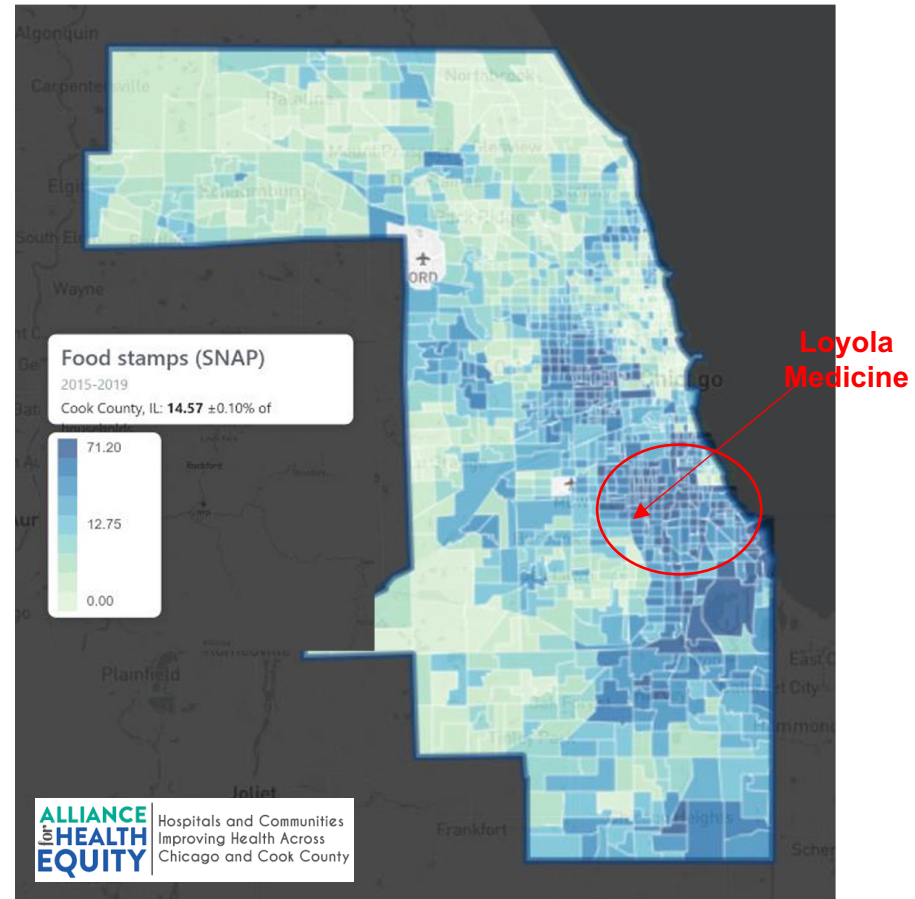




## 2019-2020 Priority Health Needs

- Social Determinants of Health
- Access to care and community resources
- Mental health and substance use disorder programs
- Chronic Disease prevention and management

Geographic Distribution of Households receiving SNAP benefits, Cook County, IL



# Implementing a Food is Medicine Program to Address Food Insecurity in an Academic Medical Center



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Nicole Wynn, DNP, RN-BC; Beth A. Staffileno, PhD, FAHA;  
Jennifer M. Grenier, DNP, CENP, CNML, RN-BC; Janice Phillips, PhD, RN, CENP, FAAN

## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Food insecurity is a public, social, and health concern.

**Local Problem:** A Food is Medicine Program was developed to address food insecurity.

**Methods:** A quality improvement initiative was piloted on 3 acute care units.

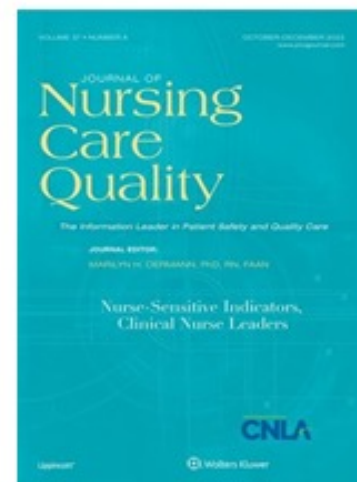
**Interventions:** Patients were screened for Social Determinant of Health (SDoH) needs and if identified as food insecure, linked to community resources and provided with a bag of food on discharge. Education was offered to nursing staff and a pre- and postsurvey was administered to assess SDoH knowledge and confidence.

**Results:** Over a 3-month period, 2354 patients were admitted; 2063 (88%) were screened for SDoH and 220 (10%) were positive for food insecurity. Patients ( $n = 1525$ , 74%) were linked to community resources. Nearly all (97%) nurses participated in education and demonstrated increased knowledge and confidence ( $P < .001$ ).

**Conclusions:** These data provide preliminary outcomes from the Food is Medicine Program.

**Keywords:** food insecurity, Food is Medicine, hospital, Social Determinants of Health

**PUBLISHED**



# The Future of Nursing 2020-2030: Charting a Path to Achieve Health Equity



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The National  
Academies of

SCIENCES  
ENGINEERING  
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## The Future of Nursing 2020-2030: Charting a Path to Achieve Health Equity (2021)

### DETAILS

502 pages | 6 x 9 | PAPERBACK

ISBN 978-0-309-68506-1 | DOI 10.17226/25982

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## PRIORITIZING THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

### Rush Surplus Project: A Three-Pronged Approach to Addressing Food Insecurity While Reducing Waste

Hospital kitchens may not commonly serve as incubators of great initiatives, but for Jennifer Grenier, DNP, RN-BC, CNML, CENP, director of clinical operations for the cardiac service line at Rush University Medical Center (RUMC) in Chicago, Illinois, they have been just that. In 2015, while employed at Rush Oak Park Hospital (ROPH) in Oak Park, Illinois, Grenier became aware of the vast quantities of food being thrown out by the hospital cafeteria each day. To reduce this waste while simultaneously addressing the needs of patients and local communities living with food insecurity, she, along with Nicole Wynn, DNP, RN-BC, and a team of community leaders founded the Rush Surplus Project. The program began as a partnership between ROPH and the Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry (recently renamed Beyond Hunger), an organization that provides food and other services to 13 zip codes throughout the Chicago metropolitan area.

In Cook County, where Oak Park is located, food insecurity is pervasive. Shortly after the partnership with Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry was formed, the local YMCA also became a recipient site. And in 2017, after moving to RUMC Grenier and Wynn expanded the program there, this time partnering with Franciscan House, a homeless shelter on Chicago's West Side. The model works as follows. After becoming certified food handlers, volunteers from the hospital staff, including nurses, social workers, kitchen employees, and administrators, repackage the cafeteria's unused prepared foods, labeling the containers with the date and any potential allergens. Finally, volunteers from the pantry transport the food, which must be consumed within 24 hours of delivery. Since its inception, the Rush Surplus Project has provided more than 700 meals per month, or approximately 8,400 meals per year. Furthermore, each meal has reduced landfill waste by approximately 1 pound (or 8,400 pounds annually). The project has also strengthened volunteerism, thus reinforcing community bonds.

With the help of Robyn Golden, MA, LCSW, assistant vice president for population health and aging at RUMC, the Rush Surplus Project has spawned two other initiatives. The first, launched in 2017, is a partnership with Top Box Foods—an organization that provides the employees of RUMC and ROPH, many of whom struggle with food insecurity, the opportunity to purchase, at a discounted rate, a 15-pound box of produce, picked up at the hospital. The second initiative, Food Is Medicine, is a collaboration among the Rush Department of Food and Nutrition Services, the Greater Chicago Food Depository, and the Surplus Project. Upon admission to participating ROPH units, patients are screened for several social needs, and those who screen positive for food insecurity receive within 48 hours a bag of such nonperishable foods as oatmeal, canned proteins, and peanut butter, along with recipes and diet instructions for



# Mission & Vision



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The Surplus Project aims to improve the nutritional health of the community through the distribution of surplus food from hospital cafeterias to food insecure families.

The overarching goal of The Surplus Project is to eliminate food insecurity and food waste by creating collaborative relationships with hospital cafeterias and food banks. This collaborative effort to redistribute food from hospital cafeterias to families is a business-friendly, environmentally-sensitive, socially-responsible alternative to wasting food.



# Values



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- Compassion



- Sustainability



- Food Security



- Collaboration



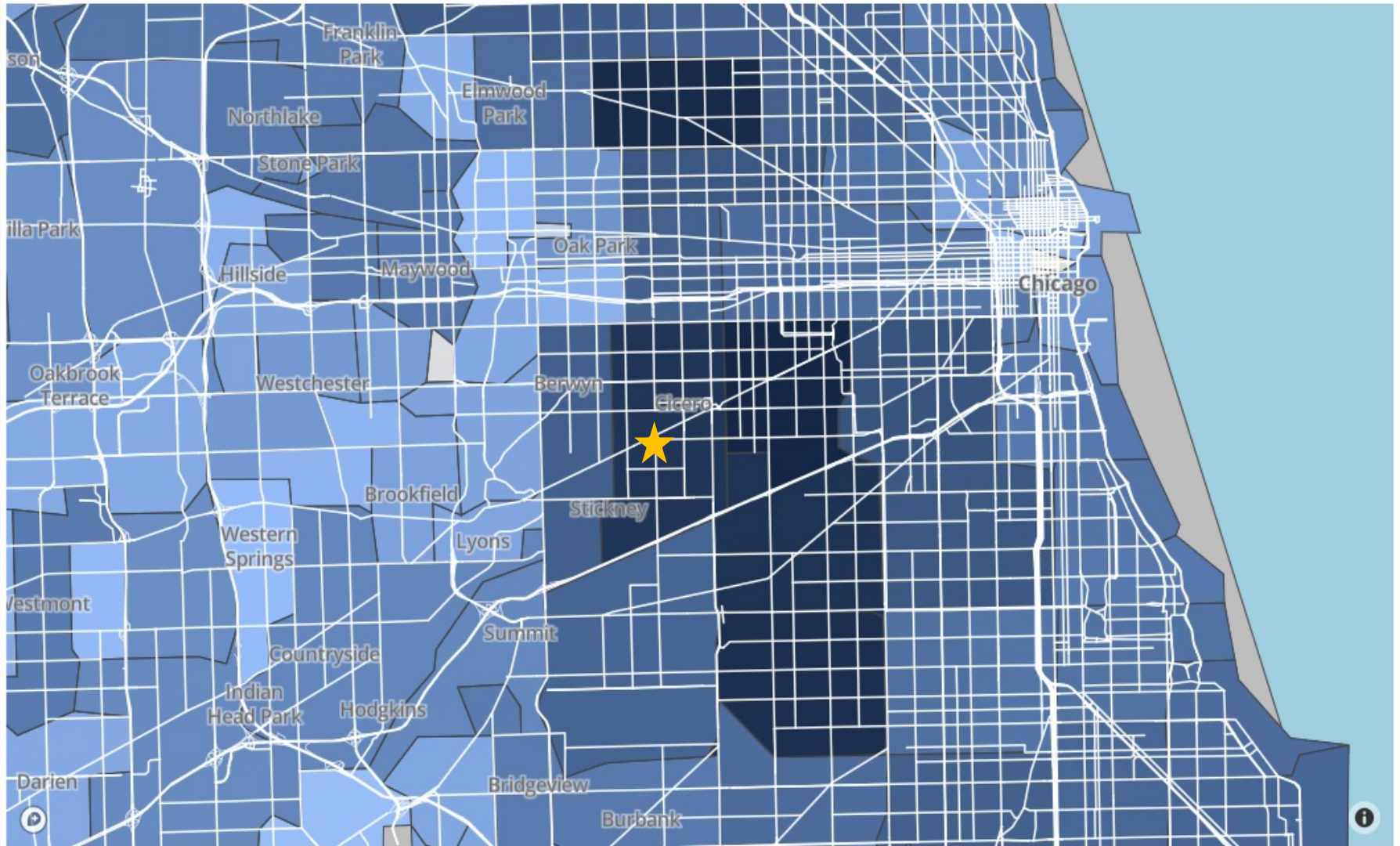
- Holistic Wellness

# BOOM a Pandemic









# DID WE STOP ?



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NO WE PUSHED THROUGH NOW MORE THAN EVER !





# Donor Sites



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Deliveries on  
Mondays & Wednesdays



Deliveries on  
Tuesdays & Thursdays

# MacNeal Respite Program at Sojourner House



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## MacNeal Respite Program:

- Doors Opened August 2019
- 3 Respite beds / 3 transition beds
- MacNeal, LUMC, West Sub,
- Staff from Housing Forward

## SURPLUS

- Began in July 2021
- Since inception:
  - 2,000 meals have been donated
  - 500 staff hours (all disciplines)

## Ending Homelessness Impact Award



MacNeal  
Hospital



## Patient Outcomes:

- 42 patients served 8/19-7/22
- 27 housed
- 6 currently at Sojourner

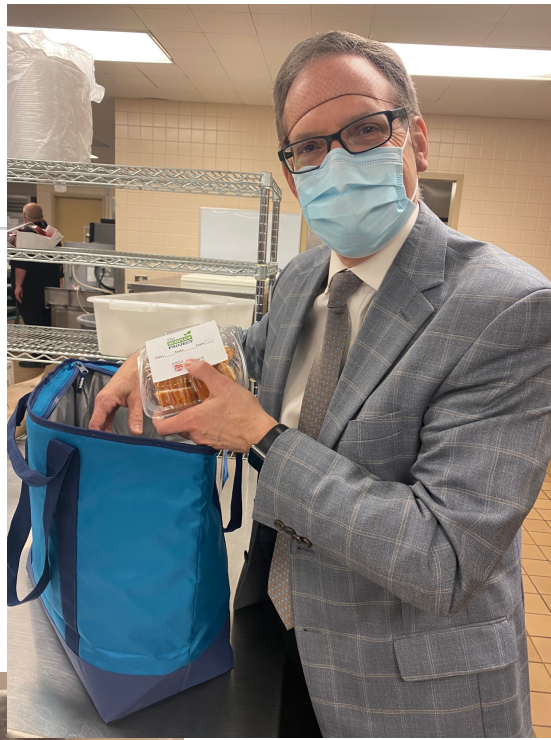


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# MacNeal Hospital's Surplus Project

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Gwvyd68r0l>





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# The **SURPLUS** PROJECT



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A Member of Trinity Health



**Choose VA**  
Choose Hines

## Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital

- Began in October 2021
- Since inception:
  - 4,500 meals have been donated
  - 280 staff hours (all disciplines)



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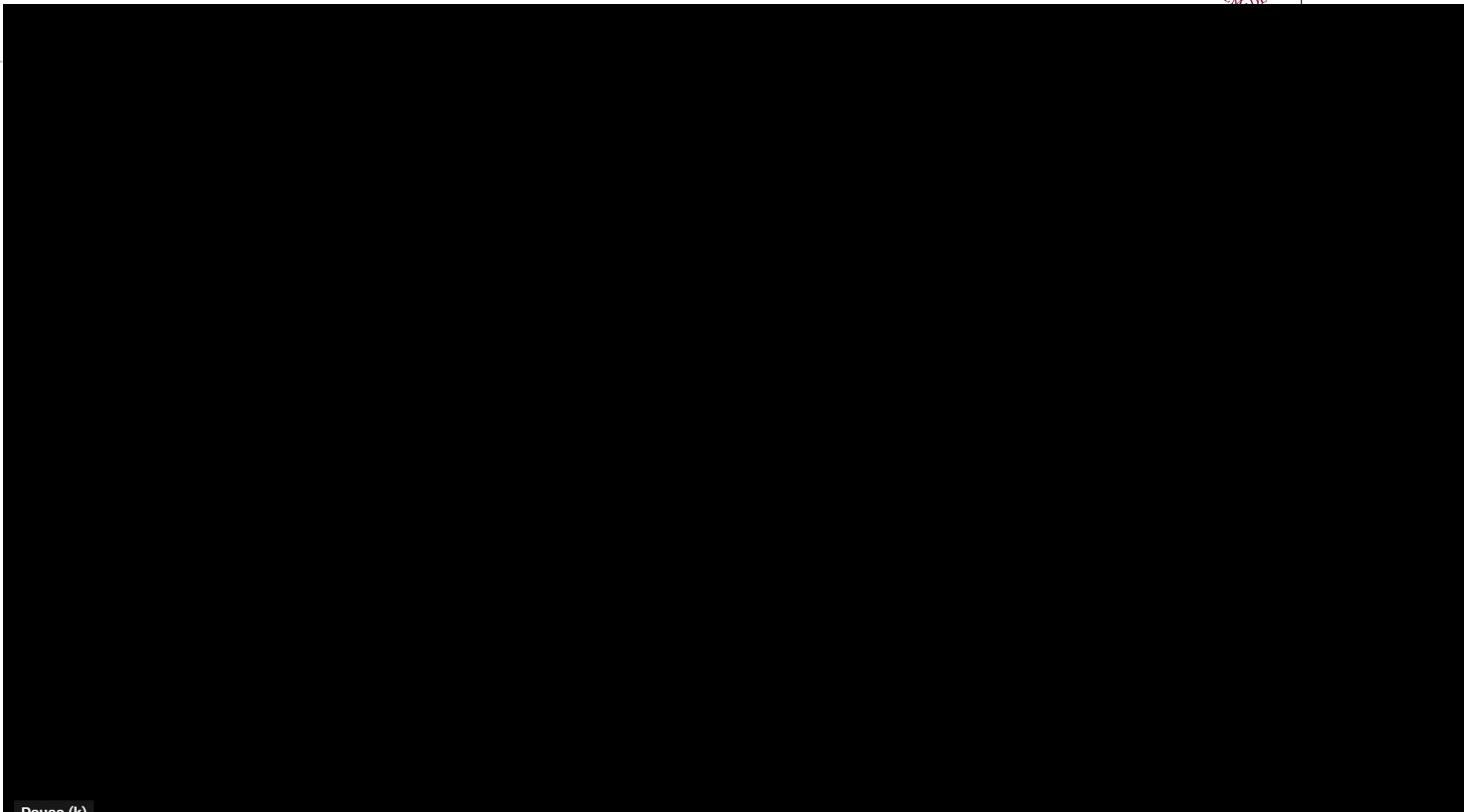


# First Delivery 50 meals Second Delivery 95 meals !



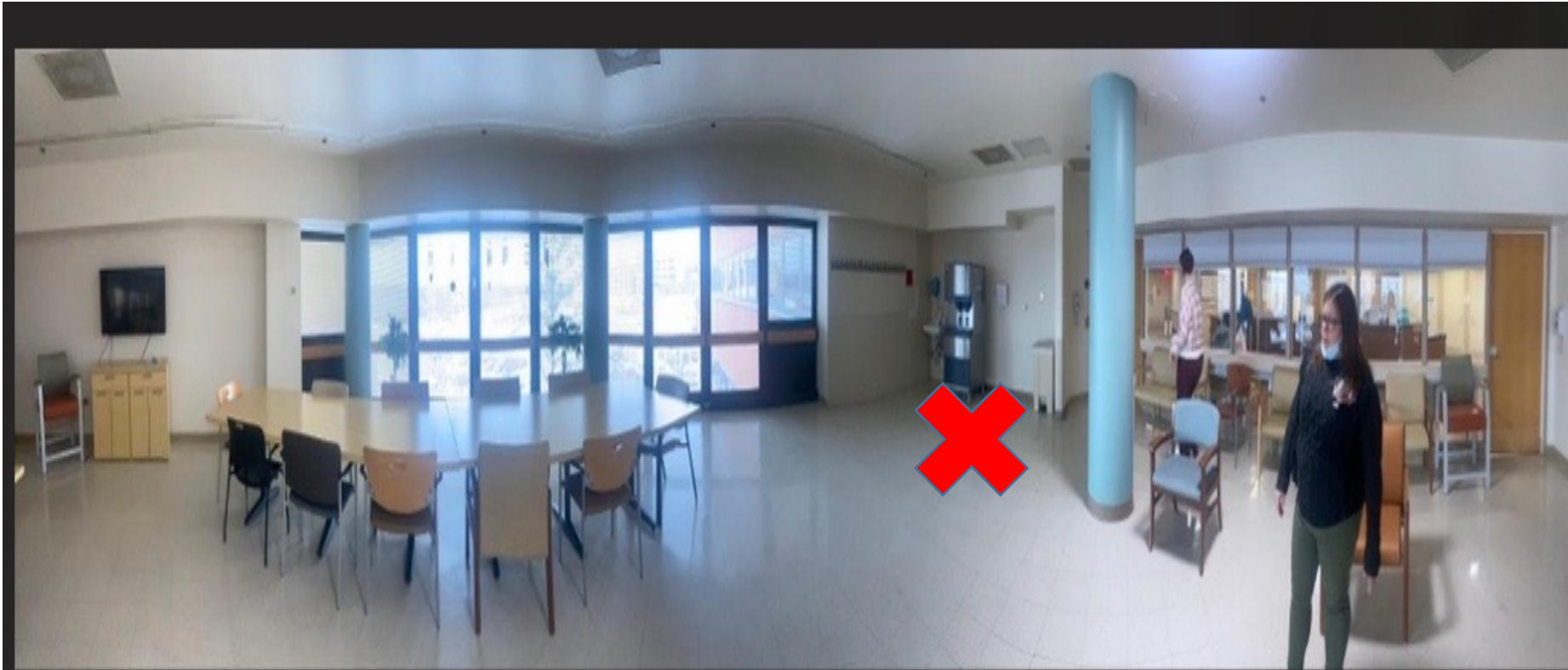
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<https://youtu.be/bpdO2cg4iPM>



# Expansion to Mercy Fitz, PA

Jen and Nikki ,

I just wanted to let you know that we officially launched **The Surplus Project at Mercy Fitzgerald today!** We could not be more excited and I want to thank you for the idea and the support you afforded us along the way. This is a phenomenal effort and really speaks to who we are as a ministry allowing us to be good stewards of our resources while also helping others.

Thanks again!

Chris

Christopher A. Cullom

President, Mercy Fitzgerald Hospital

Trinity Health Mid-Atlantic

Cell: (423) 544-2678

[Christopher.Cullom@trinity-health.org](mailto:Christopher.Cullom@trinity-health.org)



Mercy Fitzgerald Hospital

April 21 · 🌐

Mercy Fitzgerald leaders and colleagues have joined The Surplus Project – an initiative established in Illinois to address food insecurity by donating surplus food from hospital cafeterias to designated donation sites. The food is packaged and labeled individually by our staff volunteers. Our first distribution was on April 4, and we've provided over 100 meals to date.



👍❤️ 13

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# Surplus Project Team



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Nursing Leadership and Staff

Food and Nutrition Leadership

Food and Nutrition staff members

Public Safety

Care Management

Volunteers



# Detailed Process

- Interdisciplinary Leadership Team Meetings
  - Meet with the team to develop timeline
  - Since this is not the first implementation, the process is pretty simple and well developed
  - Walk-through the kitchen and determine locations for packaging and the best work-flow for this site
- Meet with Hospital Senior Leadership Teams
  - Present to group to work out finalized details
  - Achieve buy in
- Present to Food and Nutrition Staff
  - Teach them the process
- Work collaboratively with Community Health and Well-Being to determine the best recipient sites
  - Determine the recipient that would benefit
- Recruit Volunteers



# Detailed Process

- Work collaboratively with Community Health and Well-Being to determine the best recipient sites
  - Determine the recipient that would benefit the most, and how they would like to receive the food, schedule, etc.
  - Would like to select a site that is within the community to benefit the community we serve and care for, in alignment with mission, vision and values.
- Recruit Volunteers
  - How would we like to obtain volunteers?
  - What departments are interested?
  - All volunteers need to obtain their Serv-Safe Certification prior to working with the food.









# Future State



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## Sojourner House

- Purchased and donated large refrigerators and freezers for meals to be stored

## Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital

- Purchased and donated two refrigerators, two microwaves and two freezers for food to be stored, saved and warmed up in the Emergency Department, food pantry and on the Homeless Veterans Program unit.
- Meals available at the pantry and at the Healthcare for Homeless Veterans Program

**Expansion to all TRINITY HOSPITALS -129 to GO !**

[Beyond Hunger and The Surplus Project](#)

[Surplus Project](#)

[The Surplus Project and Rush University Medical Center](#)





# Contact Us



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For any questions or to get started, please contact us for assistance and the toolkit.

Jennifer Grenier  
[Jennifer.Grenier@luhs.org](mailto:Jennifer.Grenier@luhs.org)



Nicole Wynn  
[Nicole.wynn@luhs.org](mailto:Nicole.wynn@luhs.org)



**PARTICIPANT  
HANDBOOK**  
2017





# Healthy = Equitable Access to Nutritional Food

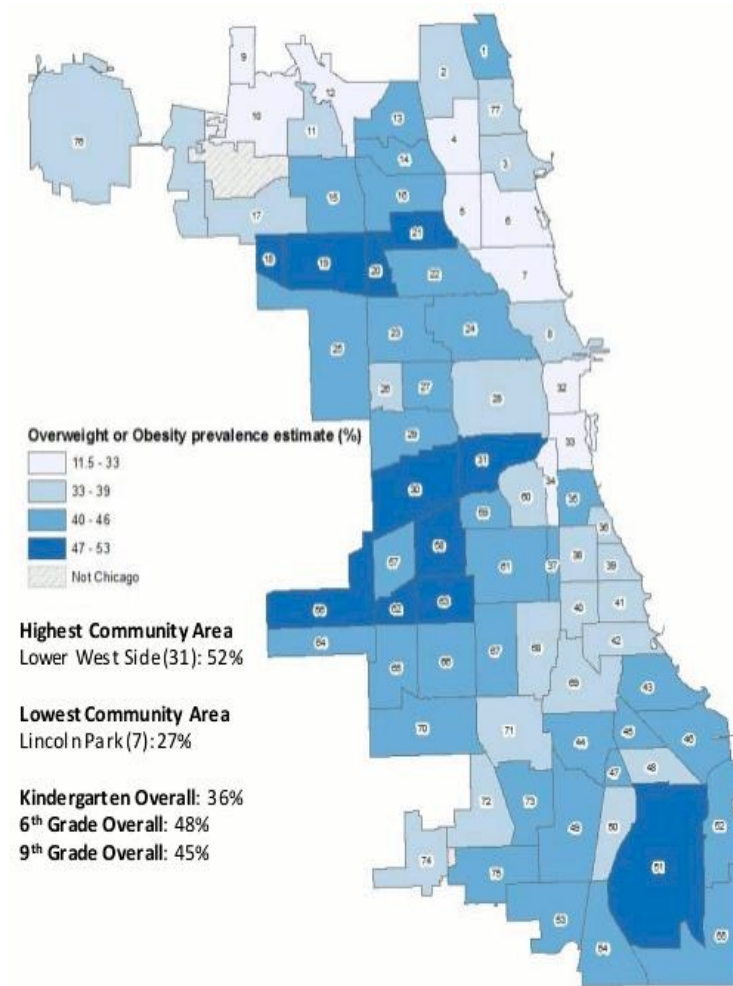
June 22, 2023

Jennifer Herd, Senior Health Policy Associate

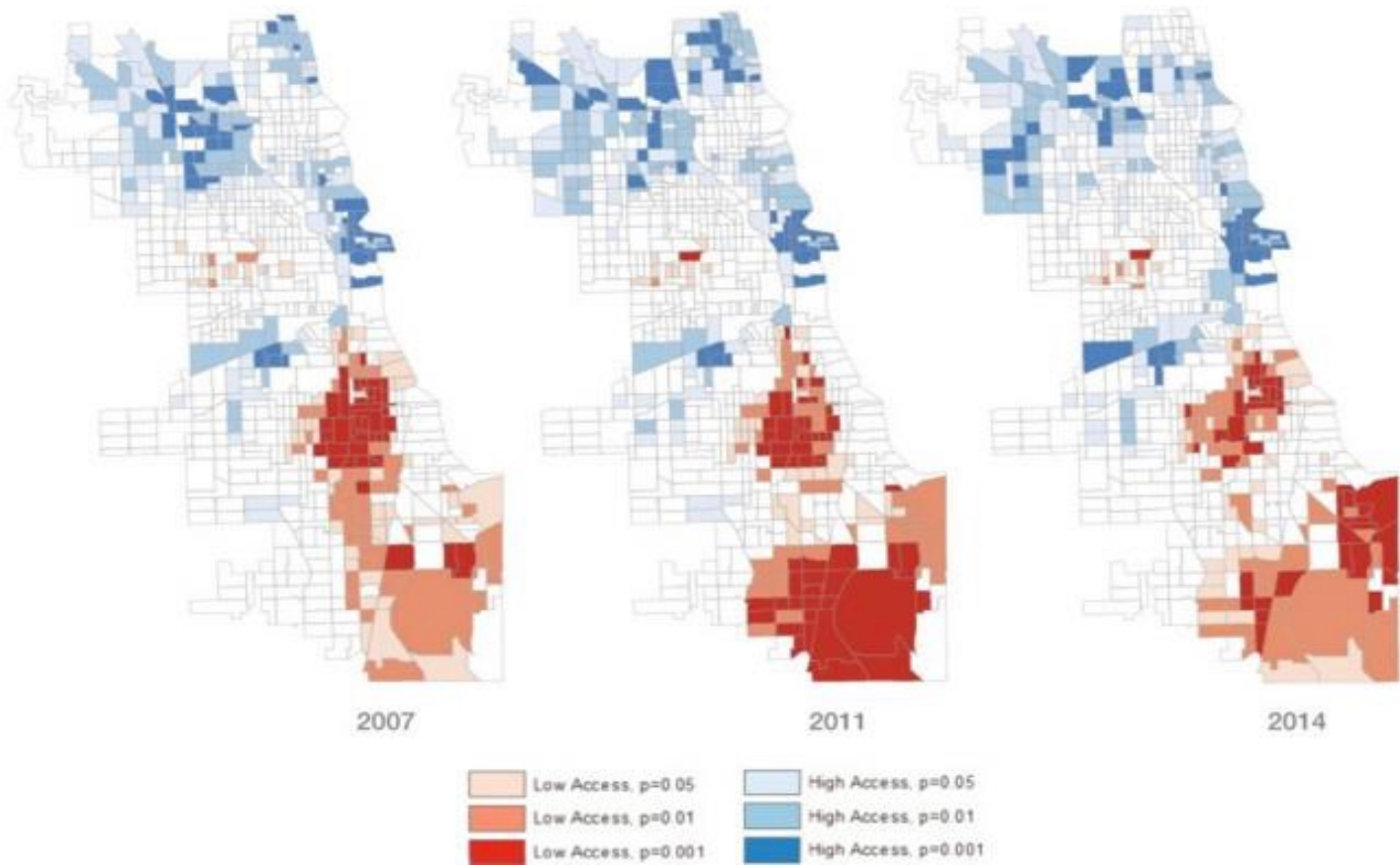


# Nutrition and Obesity

- Approximately 28% of Chicago adults (552,000) have a BMI that classifies them as obese
- Obesity is most prevalent among women, non-Hispanic Blacks, and among Hispanics
- Obesity disproportionately impacts socioeconomically-disadvantaged communities (37%)
- Chicago children have higher overweight and obesity prevalence rates than US children in the same age group
- Child obesity rates in Chicago children of all ages were highest among Black and Hispanic communities for both boys and girls



# Food Access

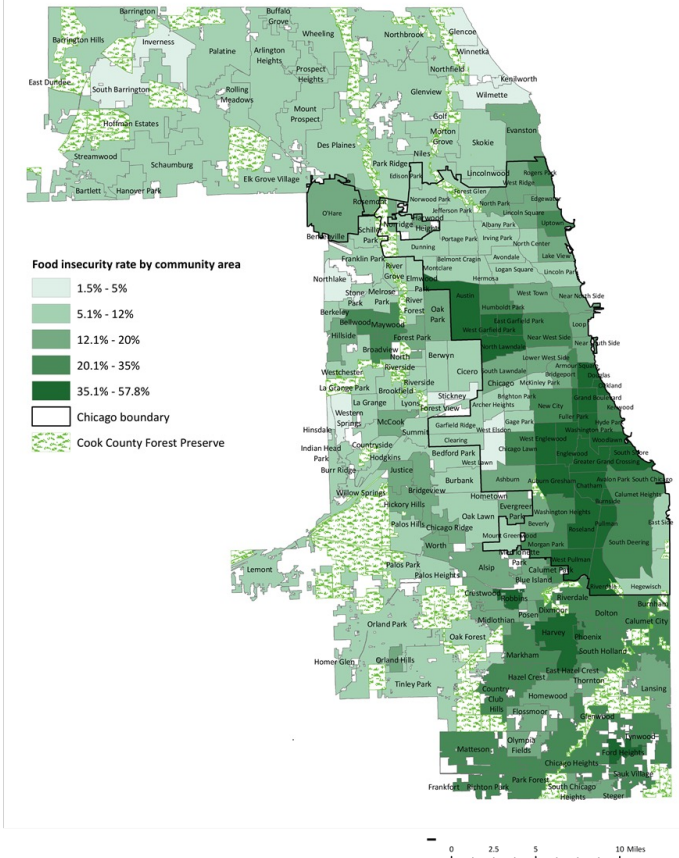


# Food Insecurity

- Approximately 500,000 Chicagoans (18%) experienced food insecurity in 2012
- Highest concentrations on the west and south side communities
- Massive divide in residents experiencing food security between the highest (Fuller Park – 56%) and the lowest (Loop - 6.5%) areas
- Over 800,000 Illinois households, or about 1.8M people, rely on Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP/LINK) for food security



## Food insecurity rates in Cook County



Prepared on 9/16/2016 by the Greater Chicago Food Depository, TM  
 Source: Gundersen, C., A. Dewey, A. Crumbaugh, M. Kato & E. Engelhard. Map the Meal Gap 2016: Food Insecurity Estimates at the County Level. Feeding America, 2016.



# Food Rescue Assessment: Learnings

We have:

- An ABUNDANCE Of Nutritious Wasted Food
- Huge And Avoidable CLIMATE IMPACT + ECONOMIC COST
- “INVISIBLE ISSUE” Within A FLAWED SYSTEM
- DISCONNECT Between Food Retail/Service x Rescue Orgs

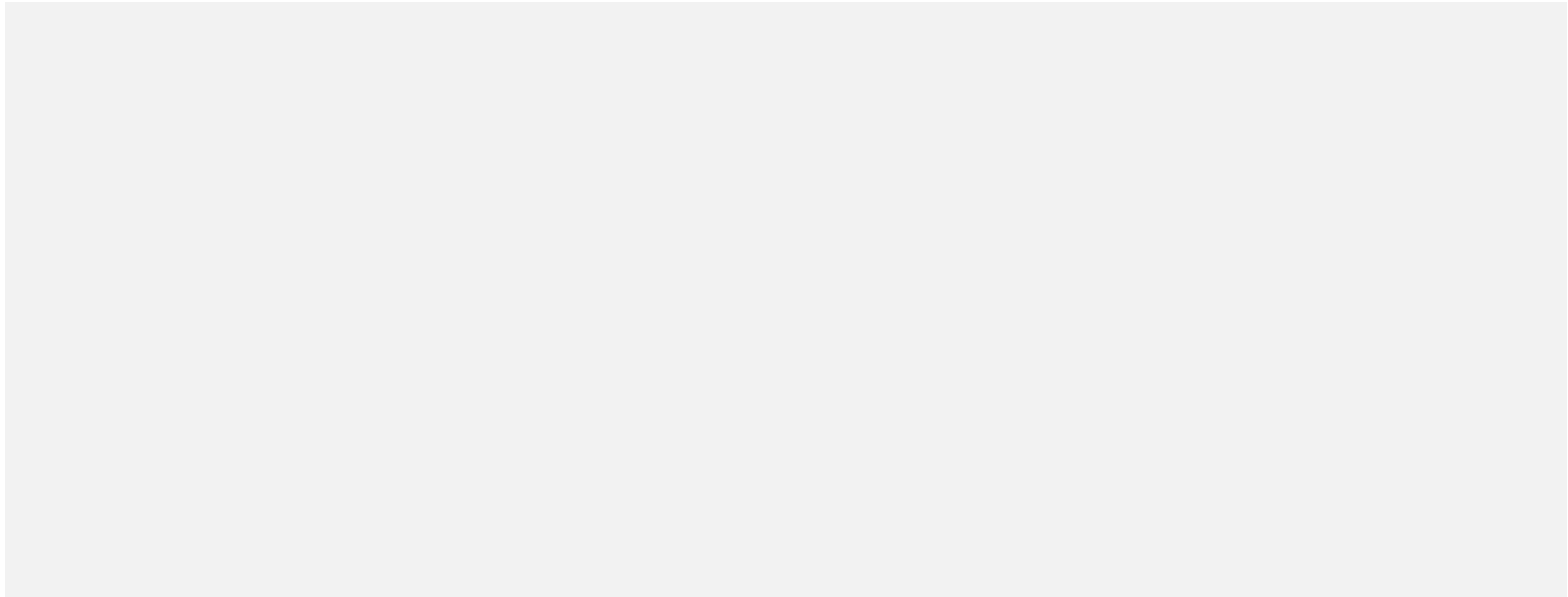




# Food Rescue Assessment: Learnings

We need:

- INTERNAL + EXTERNAL COORDINATION
- POLICY, INFRASTRUCTURE
- MOTIVATION (\$\$)



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