



Hunger in New Mexico's Military and Veteran Populations

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Food insecurity is when there is a lack of consistent access to enough food for every person in a household to live an active, healthy life.

LET'S TALK ABOUT HUNGER

Confused by the language of food crises? Learn how to spot them early and understand how your action can help save lives.

FOOD SECURITY
When all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to meet their dietary needs for an active and healthy life.

- <5% of the population is acutely malnourished
- means of earning an income
- >15 liters of water per person per day
- >2,100 calories per person per day, consistent quantity and quality of food available

FOOD INSECURITY
When people's access to food is minimally adequate and they have trouble meeting their basic needs.

- 5-10% of the population is acutely malnourished
- unsustainable means of earning an income
- about 15 liters of water per person per day but unstable
- <2,100 calories per person per day, barely adequate diet

ACUTE FOOD AND LIVELIHOOD CRISIS
When there is a critical lack of access to food coupled with high levels of acute malnutrition when people can't meet their food needs only by eating whatever is available.

- 10-15% of the population is acutely malnourished
- serious interruption to the means of earning an income
- 7.5-15 liters of water per person per day
- Unable to meet <2,100 calories per person per day without extreme measures; limited food choices

HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY
When there is a severe lack of access to food and beverages, acute malnutrition, water shortages, and people's food needs are not being met.

- 15-30% of the population is acutely malnourished
- critical and unsustainable interruption to the means of earning an income
- <7.5 liters of water per person per day
- <2,100 calories per person per day; access to 3 or fewer food groups

FAMINE
When people face a complete lack of access to food and other basic needs and experience acute starvation, death, and malnutrition.

- >30% of the population is acutely malnourished
- complete loss of the means of earning an income
- <5 liters of water per person per day
- An extreme shortage of calories per person per day; access to 1-2 food groups

To learn more about food crises and how droughts, conflicts, and other hazards can trigger them, visit OXFAMERICA.ORG/HUNGER.

OXFAM

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Hunger in New Mexico

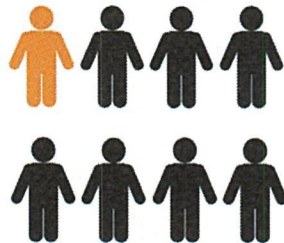
15.2% Food Insecurity



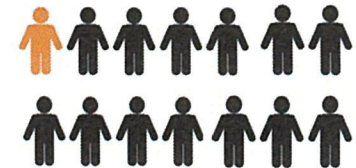
Overall, 321,370 people are
facing hunger
OR
1 in 7 New Mexicans



100,420 are children (up to 19)
OR
1 in 5 children



32,200 are older adults (50-59)
OR
1 in 8 older adults



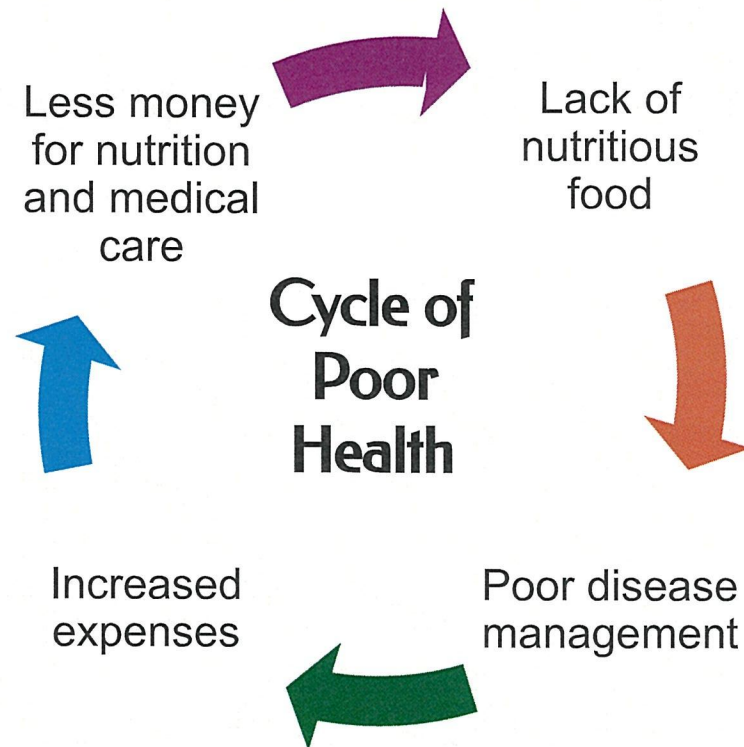
37,500 are seniors (60+)
OR
1 in 14 seniors

Intersection of Hunger & Health

Healthy bodies and minds at every age require nutritious meals

People who are food insecure are at a higher risk of developing:

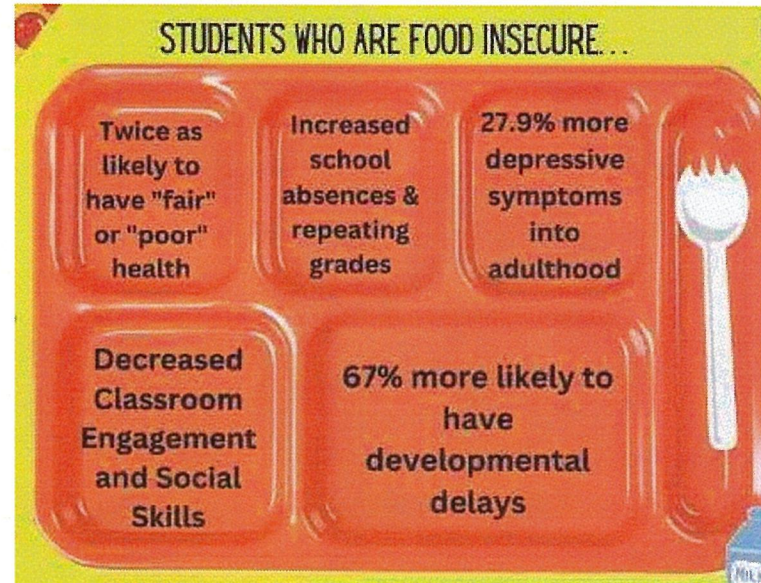
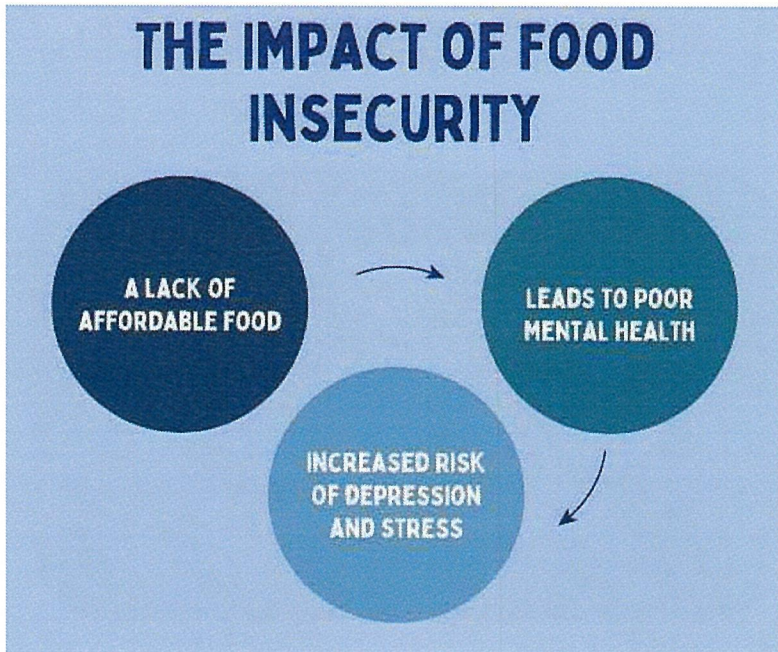
- Type II Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Obesity



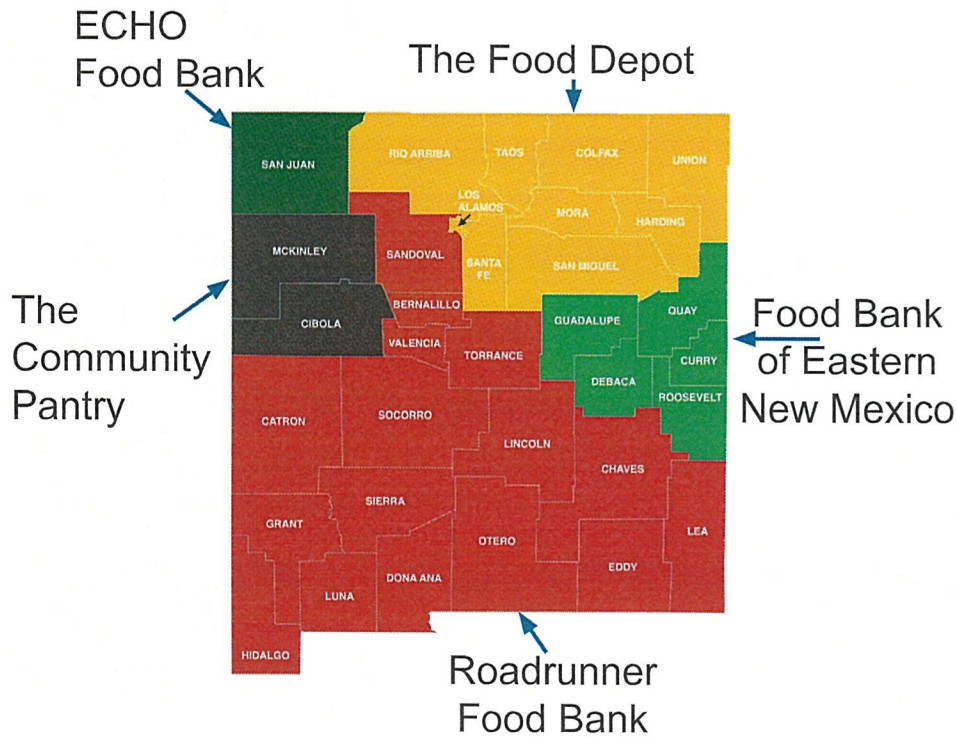
Everything is interconnected. Food insecurity does not exist in a vacuum.



Overall Impacts

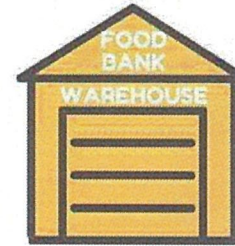


How State Funding Comes to the Food Banks and What Counties They Serve:



Food is:

- Donated
- Purchased
- Rescued from retailers
- Received through contracts



Food Banks pick up and receive truckloads



of food every week.



Food is distributed to each of New Mexico's 33 counties.

Volunteers help:

- Box
- Sort
- Repack
- Relabel



Hunger relief is provided to **tens of thousands** of New Mexicans **each week**.

Food is supplied to free food programs including:

- Food Pantries
- School Partners
- After-school Programs
- Community Kitchens
- Daycare Centers
- Emergency Shelters
- Soup Kitchens
- Senior Meal Sites
- Low-income Housing
- Chapter Houses
- Health Partners



Food Insecurity Among Veterans and Military Families:

**Veterans and Military Families
Face Food Insecurity at Twice
the Rate of the General Public**

- **2019:** 1 in 8
- **2021:** 1 in 5
- **2022:** 1 in 6
- **2023:** 1 in 5



Most Common Reasons for Food Insecurity for Military Families:

Low pay:

- Many military members, especially those just starting, don't make a lot of money. This can make it hard to buy groceries, especially if they have kids.



Hard to find jobs:

- It can be hard for the partners of military members to find steady jobs, especially if they have to move often or live on a military base.



Not many stores nearby:

- Some military bases are far from grocery stores or food pantries, making it hard to get food.



Unexpected expenses:

- Just like everyone else, military families can have unexpected expenses that eat into their budget, like moving costs or medical bills.



Not eligible for food help:

- Some military family members don't qualify for food assistance programs because they're considered to have too much income. This is because the housing allowance they receive to help pay for housing counts as income.



Active-Duty Military in New Mexico

| Year | Air Force Total | Estimated number of Enlisted Airmen (E-1 through E-4) 54% |
|------|-----------------|---|
| 2020 | 12,221 | 6,599 |
| 2022 | 13,439 | 7,257 |

49% enlisted have a spouse – approximately 3,555
 Approximately 7,286 dependents rely on 7,257 enlisted airmen in New Mexico

| Children Ages 0-5 | Children Ages 6-11 | Children Ages 12-18 | Children Ages 19-22 | Other Dependents |
|-------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| 29% 2,113 | 20.6% 1,501 | 11.4% 831 | 2.8% 204 | .5% 36 |

SNAP Eligibility:

| Years of Experience | E-1 (Airman Basic) | E-2 (Airman) | E-3 (Airman First Class) | E-4 (Senior Airman) |
|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 2 or less | \$2,017 / \$24,204 | \$2,261 / \$27,132 | \$2,378 / \$28,536 | \$2,634 / \$31,608 |
| Over 2 | \$2,017 / \$24,204 | \$2,262 / \$27,144 | \$2,527 / \$30,324 | \$2,768 / \$33,216 |
| Over 3 | \$2,017 / \$24,204 | \$2,263 / \$27,156 | \$2,680 / \$32,160 | \$2,918 / \$35,016 |
| Over 4 | \$2,017 / \$24,204 | \$2,264 / \$27,132 | \$2,680 / \$32,160 | \$3,066 / \$36,792 |
| Over 6 | \$2,017 / \$24,204 | \$2,265 / \$27,132 | \$2,680 / \$32,160 | \$3,197 / \$38,364 |

- At 165% for SNAP until October 1, a single E-1 would barely qualify earning \$24,849 annually
- At 200%, the cut off would be \$30,120 and would include all of E-1 & E-2
- For enlisted personnel with dependents, there would be much more flexibility

Tens of thousands

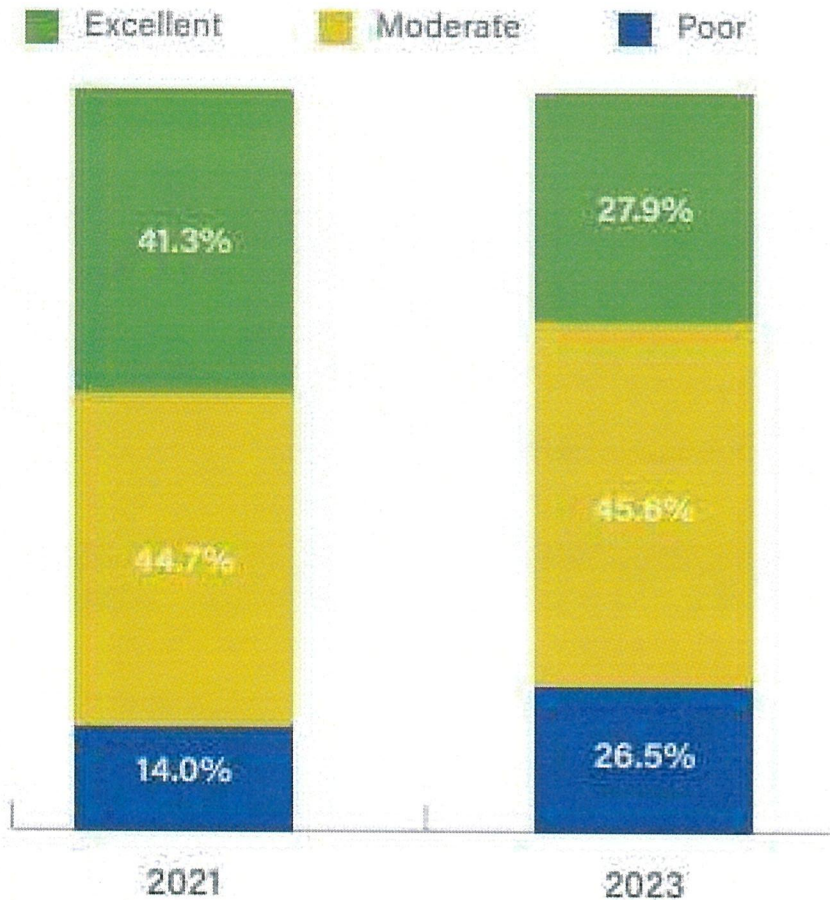
of military families are ineligible for SNAP because their Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) is counted as income.

Cost of Living*

| | Holloman AFB (Otero County) | Cannon AFB (Curry County) | Kirtland AFB (ABQ) |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Single Adult | \$38,831 | \$39,781 | \$41,647 |
| 2 Adults (1 Working) and 1 Child | \$67,567 | \$69,300 | \$70,977 |
| 2 Adults (Both Working) and 2 Children | \$96,550 | \$99,971 | \$103,610 |

* Based on MIT Living Wage Calculator

FAMILY WELL-BEING (2021-2023)



RECOMMENDING
MILITARY LIFE



57.6%

of respondents recommend a
career in military life

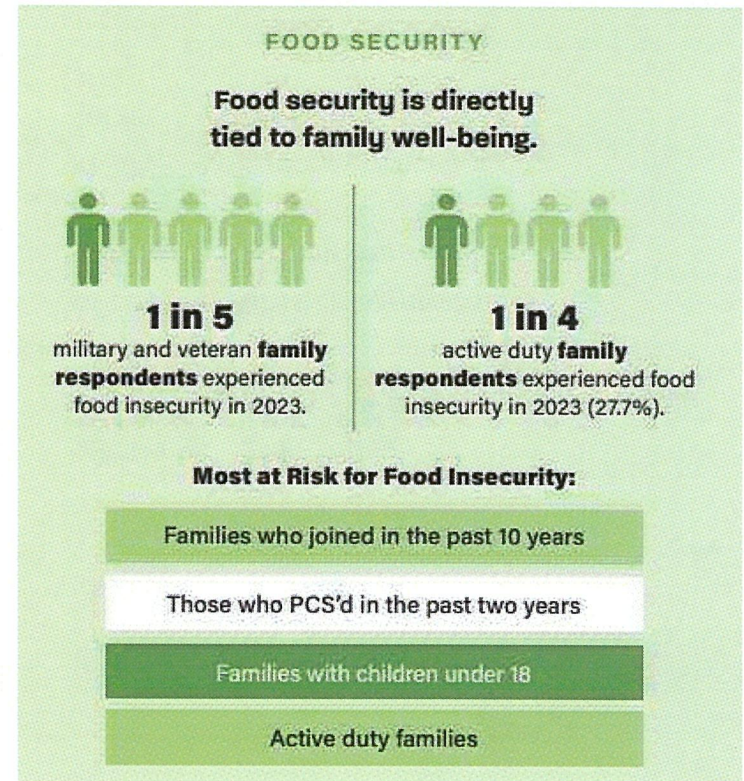
In 2019, 74.5% recommended a
career in military life



Components of Family Well-Being

- 32%: Emotional and Mental Well-Being
- 31.7%: Basic Needs, Security, and Safety
- 29.2%: Good Physical Health
- 25.5%: Family Unity and Support

One thing is very clear, that food insecurity sits at an intersection, appearing as a symptom of other challenges in military and veteran family life



PCS – Permanent Change of Station



66%

Positive Experiences with Food Support

Nearly two-thirds reported positive experiences, saying food support was helpful to their families. They shared stories of accessing food and formula banks, WIC, SNAP, food distribution events, as well as reduced/free lunches for their children.



It has been positive. Everyone was always so kind and non-judging. It was always a little emotional to see how many other military families are struggling as well though.

29.6%

Negative Experiences with Food Support

Nearly one-third reported negative experiences, the majority sharing how stigma made a difficult situation even harder. Stories described bare shelves, too many processed items, insufficient protein and produce, and struggles to find food that fit medical conditions such as allergies and/or high blood pressure.

12.6%

Barriers to Eligibility or Accessibility of Food Support

Excessive wait times while simultaneously wasting precious gasoline and time from work and family responsibilities. Lack of transportation and/or childcare can be barriers to food support. Policy changes to SNAP can leave families bewildered by inconsistency and prevents them from being able to plan or budget. Nearly 10% shared how they cannot fathom at the lowest ranks and salaries, they are not able to qualify for programs like SNAP and WIC.

Most Common Reasons for Food Insecurity for Veterans:

Low income:

- Many veterans, especially older ones or those with disabilities, may not have enough money to afford food, especially if they have health problems or need to pay for medicine.



Trouble finding work:

- Leaving the military can be a big change. Veterans need time to find jobs and housing. This can make it hard to have a steady income to buy food.



Impact of military service:

- Some veterans have physical and mental conditions from their time in the military. These conditions can make it hard to work or manage daily life, making it harder to afford food.

Veterans in New Mexico

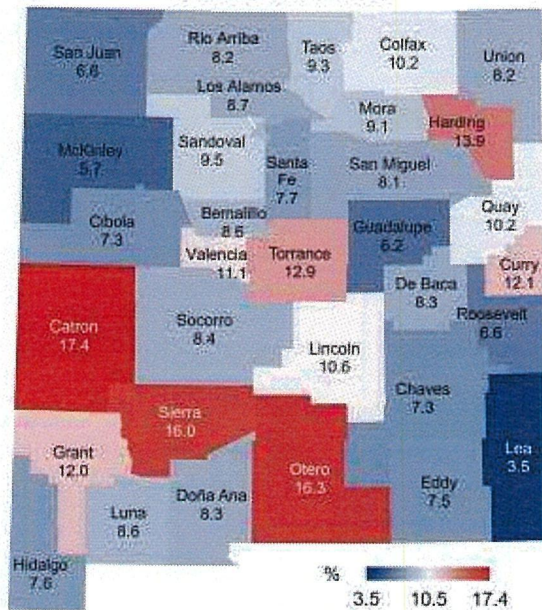
4. Period of Military Service for New Mexico Veterans

| Start Date | End Date | Event | # Veterans | % of Total |
|----------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| | December 1941 | Pre World War II | 17 | 0.0% |
| December 1941 | December 1946 | World War II | 2,365 | 1.7% |
| December 1941 | January 1955 | World War II & Korean War | 201 | 0.1% |
| December 1941 | April 1975 | World War II, Korea & Vietnam Era | 230 | 0.2% |
| January 1947 | June 1950 | Between World War II & the Korean War | 282 | 0.2% |
| July 1950 | January 1955 | Korean War | 7,616 | 5.5% |
| July 1950 | April 1975 | Korean War & Vietnam Era | 1,332 | 1.0% |
| February 1955 | July 1964 | Between the Korean War & Vietnam Era | 8,936 | 6.4% |
| May 1975 | July 1990 | Between Vietnam Era & the Gulf War | 20,698 | 14.9% |
| August 1964 | April 1975 | Vietnam Era | 47,335 | 34.0% |
| August 1964 | August 2001 | Vietnam Era & Gulf War '90-01 | 3,123 | 2.2% |
| August 1964 | As of 2020 | Vietnam Era & Both Gulf War Periods | 504 | 0.4% |
| August 1990 | August 2001 | Gulf War '90-01 | 17,642 | 12.7% |
| August 1990 | As of 2021 | Both Gulf War Periods | 10,171 | 7.3% |
| September 2001 | As of 2021 | Gulf War '01 & Later | 18,895 | 13.6% |

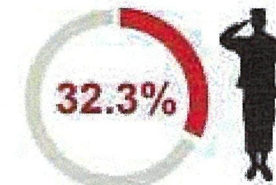
3. Veterans by Age



2. Veterans as a Percentage of the Population, by County, 2021
New Mexico: 8.6%



7. Disability Status



of **VETERANS**
have some
disability

SNAP for Veterans:

- Data from 2017-2019
- New Mexico had 143,000 veterans
- 8% of New Mexico's veterans (12,000) were receiving SNAP benefits

1.2

million low-income veterans use SNAP (formerly known as food stamps).

Unhoused Veterans

- 7% of the general population can claim veteran status, yet veterans account for 23 percent of the unhoused population, and 33 percent of unhoused men nationwide
- In 2023, the total number of veterans who experienced homelessness was 35,574, an increase of 7.4% over January 2022
- According to the NM Department of Veterans Affairs, that number has grown to 41,000 in 2024



What Can We Do?

Ramp up specific programs near bases to ensure our active-duty personnel don't have to worry about putting food on the table. Could be through:

- Pantry locations and regular events near or on bases
 - Provide funding and community support
- School pantries at schools with high concentrations of military families
 - Provide funding and community support
- Partnerships with other organizations with existing military connections
 - Excellent example is the Military Family Advisory Network
- Advocating for policy changes to support service members
 - Extending the Temporary Lodging Allowance



What Can We Do?

Knowing what causal factors are linked to increased food insecurity for military families and responding quickly with a warm hand off to support services when they happen. This requires engagement and action from military leadership at each base location.

- Financial emergency in the past 12 months
 - Connection to social service supports
- Those who PCS'd or moved due to military orders in the past 2 years
 - Partnership with the food bank network to create a welcome box with necessary items to set up a new household
 - Connection to social service supports
- Those who have had a child within the last 12 months
 - Connection with WIC
- Those who report military spouse unemployment
 - Dept. of Workforce Solutions focusing efforts in Clovis/Portales, Alamogordo/Las Cruces, and Albuquerque with military spouses/partners



What Can We Do?

- Provide funding for programs seeking to reach and feed food insecure veterans
- Invest in early interventions to promote awareness of SNAP among service members who are at risk of becoming food insecure as veterans
 - For those transitioning out of service, ensure connection to social service supports
- Expand screening for food insecurity, with a particular focus on veterans who do not receive care through VA, older veterans, and disabled veterans
 - Social determinants of health screenings through medical appointments is one of the best options here, relying heavily on Community Health Workers (CHW), a closed loop referral system, and the food bank network



What Can We Do?

- Direct resources to studies of promising interventions for food-insecure veterans, as well as studies of why so many veterans experience food insecurity
- Actively reach out to veterans to ensure they are signed up for programs like SNAP and know where to access TEFAP. If they are older than 60, that they know where to access CSFP, home delivered meals, and where congregate meal sites are near them
- For unhoused veterans: Most of the funding for unhoused programs comes from federal “block grants” (CSBG) that are administered by the state and local governments decide where that money is spent. Make unhoused veterans a priority for state assemblies, mayors, county and city council members and commissioners.

