



# Cache County Human Services Assessment: Food Insecurity

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Northern Social Services Nonprofit Coalition



College of Humanities & Social Sciences  
**Transforming Communities Institute**  
UtahStateUniversity.

## SOCIAL WORK



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### ***About Northern Social Services Nonprofit Coalition***

The Northern Social Services Nonprofit Coalition (NSSNC) develops and promotes Cache Valley social service nonprofit organizations to enhance access, improve service quality, and raise awareness of support systems to improve the lives of local individuals and families. Their vision is that Cache Valley families and individuals are safe, housed, supported and empowered through advocacy, education, direct services, and continuous collaboration. NSSNC members include leadership representatives from the following organizations: CAPSA, Neighborhood Nonprofit Housing Corporation, Options for Independence, The Family Place, English Learning Center, Cache Refugee & Immigration Connection, Cache Food Pantry, Utah Families Feeding Families, 4 Helping Hearts, Logan Pride Foundation, Cache Valley Humanitarian Center, Little Lambs Foundation of Utah, Boys & Girls Club of Northern Utah, Cache Valley Veterans Association. These organizations are united in their efforts to “compete together for the community.”

### ***About Transforming Communities Institute***

The Transforming Communities Institute at Utah State University responds to community-identified needs across Utah. Drawing on strengths and assets, TCI collaborates and engages with stakeholders to transform communities through research, professional education and training, advocacy, and action to build strong, resilient and inclusive communities. TCI envisions that all Utahns will live in thriving, vibrant communities.

## **The Current Project**

As Cache Valley grows, the strain on current human services has grown, and the lack of necessary resources to address social problems has become painfully obvious. The current project, the Cache County Human Services Assessment, provides local service agencies and policymakers with information regarding available human service programs and organizations, barriers that prevent people from accessing services, and potential gaps in services. Five areas of human services in Cache County were explored in the study: homelessness and housing; aging and people with disabilities; food insecurity; mental health and substance use services; and inclusivity, and support for diverse populations. Data were gathered from local organizational leaders via survey. If an organization did not respond, secondary data were gathered via online research. The study was designed and implemented as a collaborative effort of the Northern Social Services Nonprofit Coalition, USU’s Transforming Communities Institute, and USU Department of Social Work students of the 2022 MSW Organizations & Community course with the oversight of Dr. Jayme Walters.

In this report, the findings and recommendations from food insecurity services are shared. In March and April 2022, a mixed-methods Qualtrics survey was emailed to organizations providing food assistance services. Data gathered during the assessment period were analyzed using descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis of two-cycle coding (descriptive and pattern coding).

## **Background**

### ***Food Insecurity and Poverty***

Food insecurity is a problem that continues to grow in Cache County. The nonprofit, Feeding America, defines food insecurity as the “USDA’s measure of lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members and limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods.”<sup>1</sup> Households may not always face the challenge of food insecurity; however, the problem can arise when a household “need[s] to make trade-offs between important basic needs, such as housing or medical bills, and purchasing nutritionally adequate foods.”<sup>1</sup> In a 2021 study conducted by Utahans Against Hunger, 13% of Cache County residents are food insecure.<sup>2</sup> The study also showed that 15.7% of children in the county meet the governmental standard of being food insecure.<sup>2</sup> However, only 8.3% of eligible households in Cache County are using government assistance for food security.<sup>2</sup>

Food insecurity strongly correlates with living in poverty. The U.S. government calculates the poverty line, in part, by using the number of individuals in a household to annual income. The 2022 HHS Poverty guidelines state that a family of three with a \$23,030 yearly income would be considered to be living in poverty.<sup>3</sup> The U.S. Census Bureau estimated that as of July 2021, the population of Cache County was 137,417 individuals – a 17.45% increase since 2010.<sup>3</sup> Rapid population growth, COVID, lack of competitive wages, and high rental costs have contributed to at least 14.6% of Cache County residents living in poverty.<sup>4</sup> This is notable as Cache County’s poverty rate is 4% higher than the national poverty rate.<sup>4</sup> Even more important to note is that there are major disparities related to race and poverty in Cache County. While people who identify as white have a poverty rate of 12.6%, all other races have much higher poverty rates: Black/African American, 51.4%; American Indian/Alaska Native, 20%; Latino/Hispanic, 21.2%; Asian, 35.8% and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 23.3%.<sup>4</sup>

### **About Service Providers Addressing Food Insecurity in Cache County**

As of 2022, there are 10 organizations focused on food insecurity in Cache County. About 55% of the organizations are nonprofits, and the other 45% are federal or state governmental agencies. There are three governmental agencies that assist different food insecure populations. The Cache and Logan School districts offer reduced-price breakfasts and lunches to students whose fall below 185% of the federal poverty line. For families whose income is less than 130% of poverty guidelines, lunches and breakfast are free. This program is available to K-12 students. The school districts also offer free meals to any child (0-18) at 31 different county and city schools during summer.<sup>5</sup> Parents are also allowed to eat during summer at a reduced price.



The federal WIC supplemental nutrition program is available specifically to women, infants, and children up to age five. The purpose of WIC is “to safeguard the health of low-income pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants and children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk by providing nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating including breastfeeding, promotion and support, and referrals to health care.”<sup>6</sup> The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, was created to be “short-term food

assistance for the unemployed, or longer-term help for those who can’t work or aren’t earning enough.”<sup>7</sup> SNAP is designed to assist families, elderly, or disabled individuals who are low-income purchase nutritious food. Utah limits benefits for individuals who are able bodied and do not have children to three months out of every 36 months. SNAP has income and liquid asset requirements that must be met before an individual or family can participate in the program.

There are seven nonprofits that play an important role in assisting the food insecure population of Cache County. Three nonprofits, Utah Families Feeding Families (UFFF), Loaves and Fishes, and 4 Helping Hearts, offer food assistance to anyone in need. UFFF operates three “Porch Pantries” in Hyrum and North Logan. The pantries remain stocked through donations and are open to anyone. Loaves and Fishes hosts a lunch every first and third Saturday at the Logan First Presbyterian Church. They serve an average of 6,000 meals yearly.<sup>8</sup> 4 Helping Hearts provides emergency food bags for individuals who are homeless or unable to access the Cache Community Food Bank afterhours.

### **Food Insecurity Highlights**

- Cache County Total Population: 126,336
- Food insecure individuals: 16,200 (13%)
- Food insecure children (age ≤ 18): 5,570 (14.7%)
- 57% of food insecure individuals meet the low income requirement for SNAP benefits<sup>1</sup>
- 43.4% of students in Logan School District qualify for free or reduced lunch<sup>12</sup>
- 129,533 - Number of in-home meals delivered in Cache County by Meals on Wheels in 2021<sup>5</sup>

# Populations Served by Food Organizations

## All in Need

**Families Feeding Families:**  
Porch Pantries

**Loaves and Fishes:**  
Lunch every 1st and 3rd  
Sunday

**4 Helping Hearts**

**In 2021, there were  
9752 visits to the SNAC  
Pantry**

**The SNAC Pantry  
distributes 2,000-2,500  
lbs. of food a week to  
USU students**

## Special Populations

**Cache/Logan School District:**  
Free/reduced lunches (income  
based), free summer lunch  
program

**Federal WIC Program:**  
Available to women, infants  
and children age ≤ 5, income  
130% > poverty line

**Meals on Wheels**  
Available to Cache County  
citizens age ≥ 65

**USU Student Nutrition  
Access Center (SNAC)**  
USU students, staff or faculty  
may receive assistance 1 time  
a week, no questions asked.

## Individuals Must Meet Eligibility Requirements

**Church of Jesus Christ of  
Latter-Day Saints Bishop's  
Storehouse:**  
Accessed at discretion of local  
congregation's clergy

**Cache Food Pantry:**  
Must fall beneath 130% of  
federal poverty guidelines,  
waiting list

**Utahans Against Hunger:  
SNAP Program**  
Eligibility determined by  
income (130% > poverty line),  
family size, ages, liquid assets

**Meals on Wheels:**  
Must be age 65+

The USU Student Nutrition Access Center (SNAC) maintains a food pantry that is open to any USU student, staff, or faculty member. SNAC asks clients limit their visits to once a week. In 1938, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints created the Bishop's Storehouse to help combat food insecurity. Cache County is one of the locations of a Bishop Storehouse, and they assist church members and nonmembers. The Bishop Storehouse is a need-based rather than income-based, and a recipient must first meet with a church leader who will decide if access will be granted. The Cache

Community Food Bank provides food assistance to individuals whose household income is equal to or less than 130% of Federal Poverty Guidelines. The Cache Community Food Bank also provides support to various nonprofits in the county such as providing food to school food pantries, CAPSA, and the Logan Senior Citizen Center.<sup>9,10</sup> Also, there are four nonprofits that, despite serving different needs for minority groups, still incorporate access or referrals to food for their clients: Cache Valley Veteran's Association, Logan Pride Center, Cache Pride Center, and Cache Refugee and Immigrant Connection (CRIC).

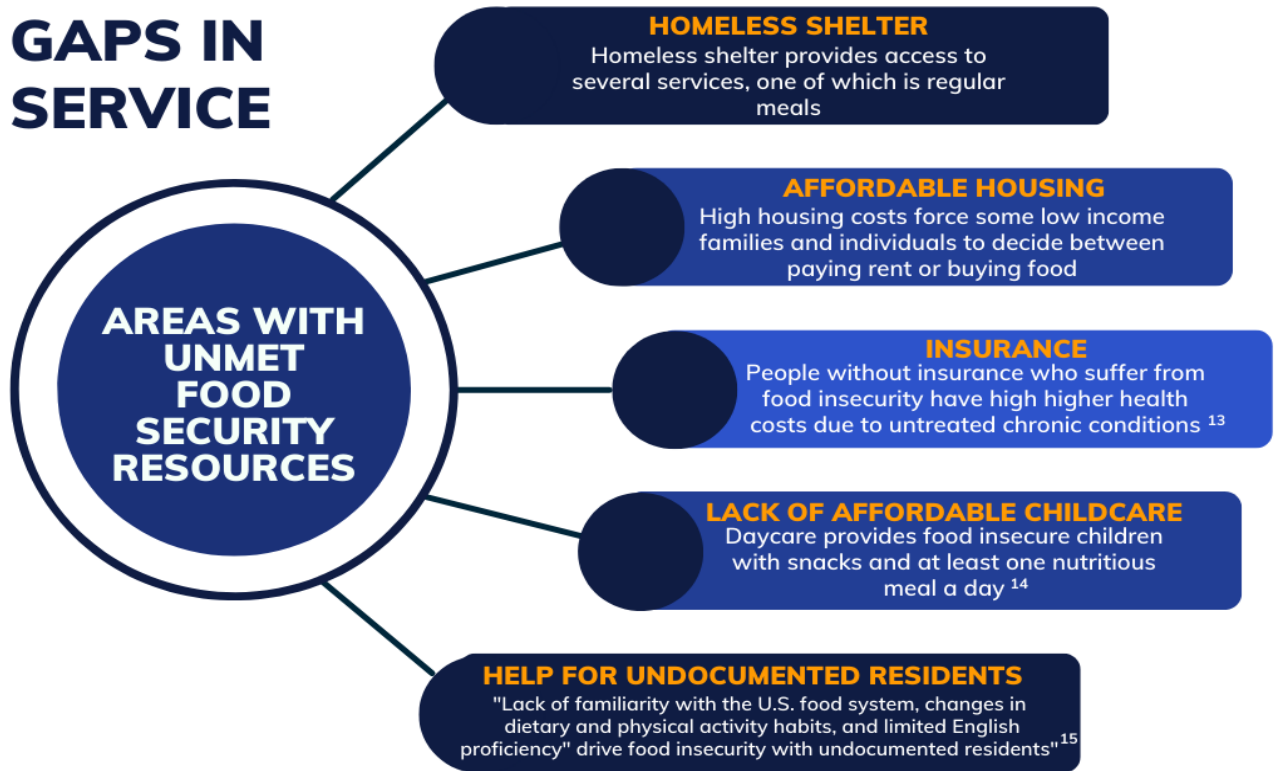
Cache County is home to Meals on Wheels, a federally and state funded service that provides nutritious meals five times a week to senior citizens who are low-income. Volunteers deliver meals Monday through Friday. The organization asks participants for a donation of \$3 per meal; however, an individual can donate any amount or not at all.<sup>11</sup> All but one of the organizations discussed are located in Logan or North Logan, the one exception being UFFF who has a porch pantry in Hyrum. [\(Scan QR code or click this link access to a map of these services\).](#)



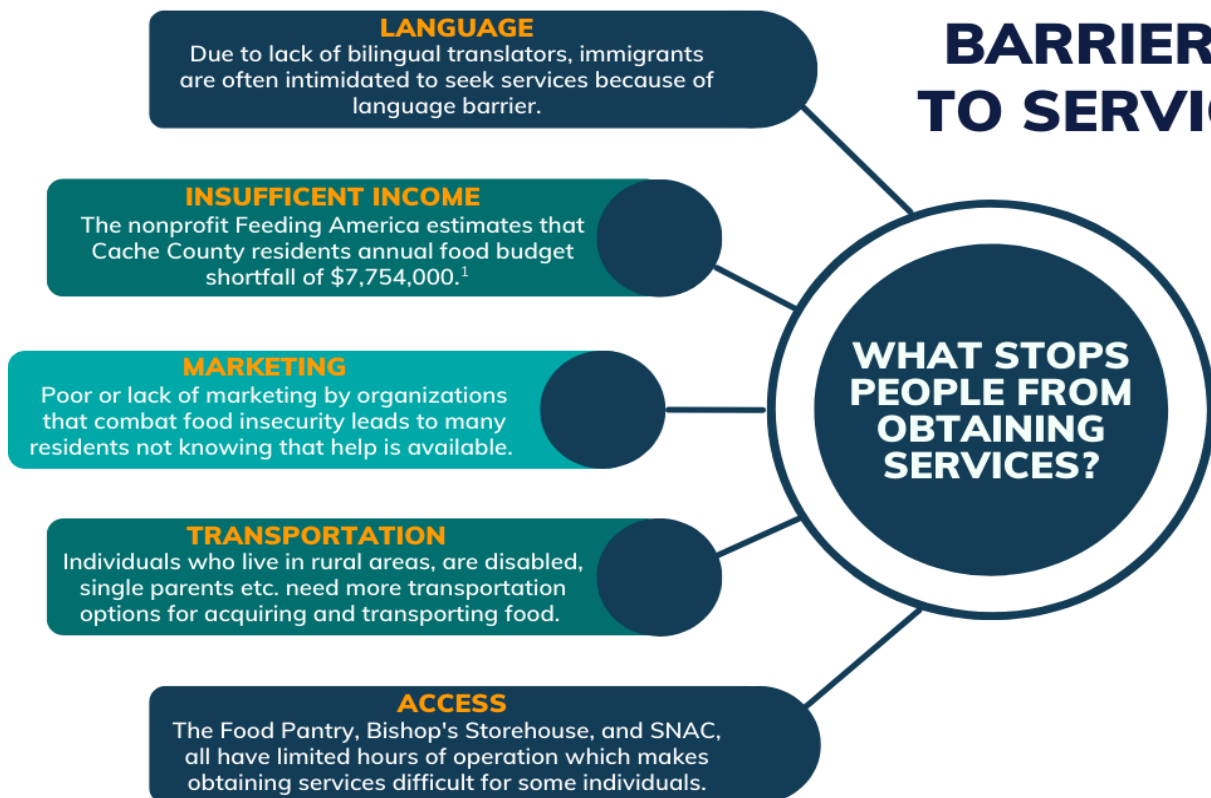
## Summary of Additional Services Available in Priority Area

Nearly all of these organizations offer services besides food assistance. For example, UFFF helps with utilities, apartment deposits, car repairs, and other expenses that may impact a person's ability to work and provide for their family. UFFF also hosts three annual giving events during Easter, Back-to-School, and Christmas for families in need. The WIC program at Bear River Mental Health offers classes and support for nursing mothers (e.g., coaching, pumps, and education). The Bishop Storehouse offers cleaning supplies, hygiene supplies, clothing, and furniture needs. At USU, SNAC offers hygiene products, information about sustainable and nutritious foods, and job training for community members with disabilities. The food security program coordinator is also able to help students find other services to meet their needs, such as childcare, insurance, and applying for SNAP, among others. 4 Helping Hearts also provide rent and utility assistance and supplies hygiene items, coats, clothes, and blankets, among other needs.

## GAPS IN SERVICE



## BARRIERS TO SERVICE



## Recommendations

1. Conduct research as to the reason(s) behind eligible households not accessing SNAP assistance and create solutions to increase enrollment in this program.
2. Survey clientele of agencies utilizing their assistance to ensure organizations' hours are during times clients can come and access food (after school, after work).
3. Organizations should provide translation services via bilingual volunteers or contractors. Another option is to provide technology that can assist in translation.
4. To better market services, USU students in communications and marketing could assist in developing campaigns and outreach tools.
5. NSSNC should consider hosting training on diversifying funding and income efforts.
6. NSSNC should consider hosting networking and peer support for coalition members to connect and discuss issues related to organizational capacity such as fundraising and marketing.

To read the other reports from Cache County Human Services Assessment, please visit: [https://bit.ly/NSSNC\\_22](https://bit.ly/NSSNC_22)

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