

This Thanksgiving, Let's Work to Address Food Insecurity in DC

By Hannah Kohanzadeh

Thanksgiving is known for good eating, spending time with loved ones, and reflecting on the past year. The holidays can be a challenging time, however, for the many families who don't have access to safe, adequate, and nutritious food— those experiencing “food insecurity.” [One in eight DC residents, and one in four children](#)—27,800—struggle with hunger. DCFPI's new guide on [Meal Resources for Children and Families in DC](#) lists opportunities and services that can help get meals on the table and improve access to healthy foods.



DC has many resources for residents experiencing food insecurity:

- Federally funded SNAP benefits (formerly known as food stamps) help [20 percent of DC residents](#) afford fresh and nutritious food.
- [Farmers' markets](#) have become more accessible, with many accepting SNAP, WIC, and Senior benefits and offering produce at discounted rates or even for free.
- [Joyful Food Markets](#) improve access to fresh fruits and vegetables for students and families in Wards 7 and 8. Baskets of seasonal, fresh produce and healthy non-perishables, and cooking demonstrations are provided in elementary schools, in a festive atmosphere where families, volunteers, and school administrators of the community gather together.
- A range of [hot meal services](#) across the city provide free meals seven days a week; mobile food pantries deliver groceries to the most high-needs areas in DC; and afterschool programs nourish the minds and stomachs of children and young adults.

The District is fortunate to have innovative and robust resources dedicated to closing the hunger gap. However, DC still has food deserts—areas where people have limited access to healthy food—especially in Wards 7 and 8, where there are only [three full-service grocery stores for 160,000 residents](#).

The established resources are necessary but not sufficient for addressing the widespread food insecurity throughout the city. DC government should prioritize equitable development, and put more resources towards addressing food insecurity in the District. In a city as prosperous as DC, there shouldn't be any food deserts.

This Thanksgiving, take the time to provide food for your family and friends, as well as your neighbors. Donate healthy canned goods to local food banks, [host a party against hunger](#), and tell Mayor Bowser and your [councilmembers](#) to support healthy and equitable development throughout the District—because food insecurity in our nation's capital is unacceptable.