

Food Insecurity In Floyd County:

Impacts on Families and Potential Strategies

May 2018

Plenty!, Inc.

192 Elephant Curve Road

Floyd, VA 24091

540-745-3898

Purpose

In an effort to better understand food insecurity in Floyd County, Virginia, Plenty! asked their Food Pantry program participants to complete a survey in the fall of 2017. Ninety-four (94) individuals participated in the survey. The survey assessed the following topics:

- Level and believed causes of food insecurity
- Information in regard to patrons dietary needs
- Identified strategies employed by patrons to help meet their food needs
- Evaluated Plenty!’s role in increasing food security
- Identified areas patrons requested assistance to lessen food insecurity

What Is Food Insecurity?

Food insecurity refers to the USDA’s measurement of a lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all members of a given household, and limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods. It can be defined simply as an economic and social condition of limited and uncertain access to adequate food. (*Feeding America, 2018*)

Plenty! uses the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) as the means to measure the level a person or family experiences food insecurity. This scale uses 8 questions to assess food insecurity on a continuum, from mild to severe. Mild food insecurity involves worrying about obtaining food, while severe food insecurity results in experiencing hunger.



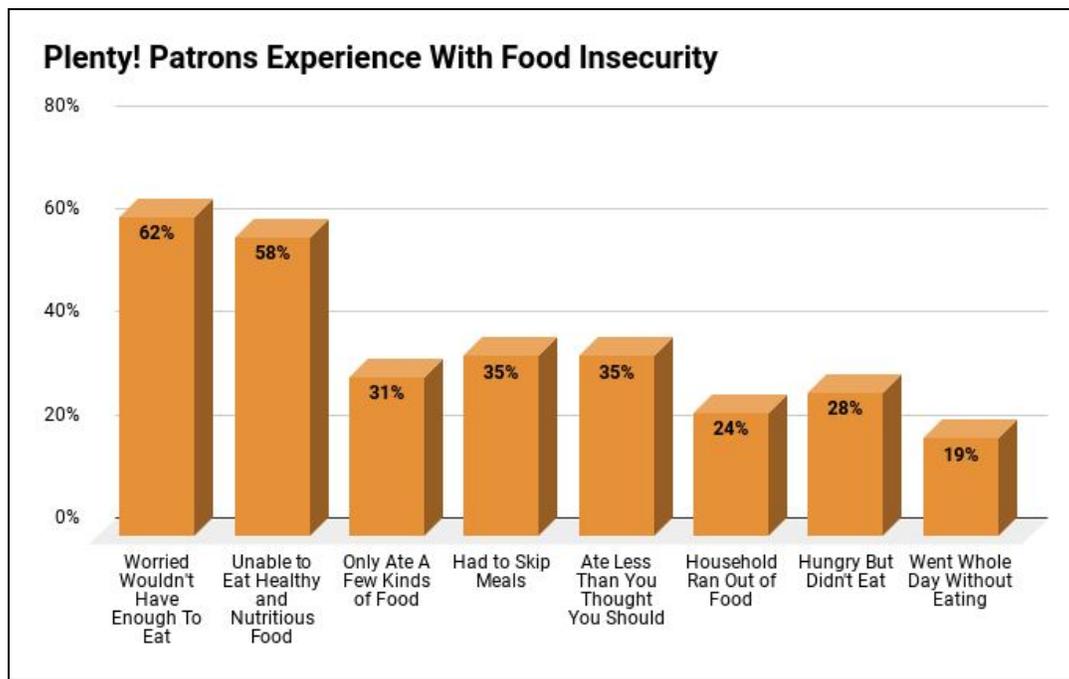
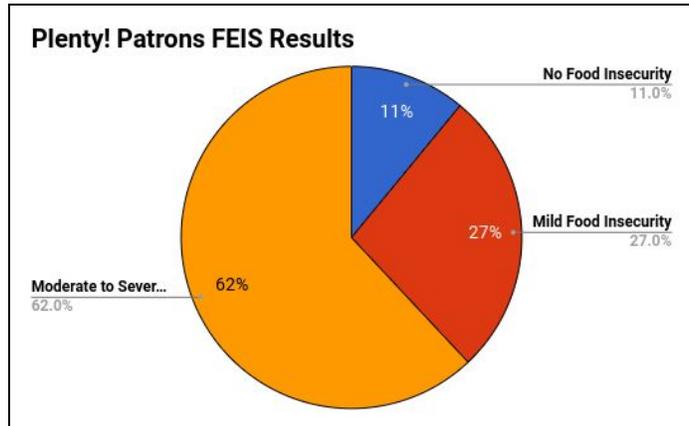
Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)

Food Insecurity Among Plenty! Patrons

Floyd County, VA has a population of 15,523 individuals and a food insecurity rate of 8.4%.

¹ The most recent available data estimates there are 1,310 food insecure individuals within the county, including 430 children.²

Plenty! is providing food to more than the estimated number of food insecure individuals within the county at 9.9% through its various programs such as Portable Produce and Food Pantry. In the year 2017, Plenty! provided food to 459 families (1,317 individuals) through their Food Pantry program and approximately 57 families (168 individuals) each week with its Portable Produce program.



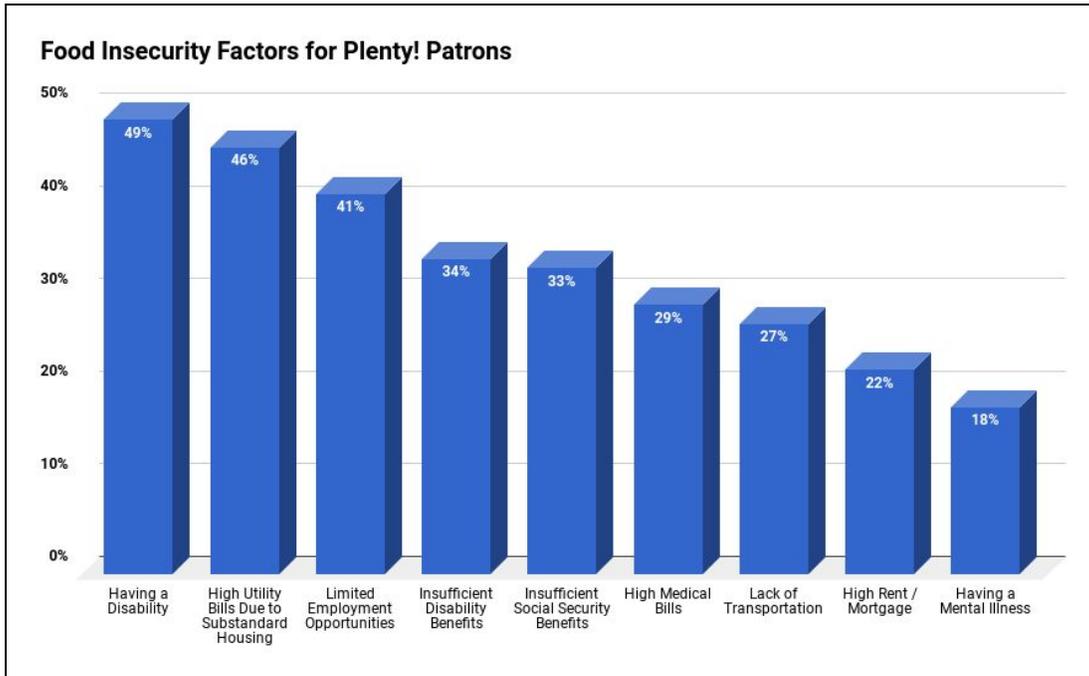
**Individuals could select more than one type of food insecurity event which they had recently experienced.*

¹ Feeding America (2017). Map the meal gap 2017: Overall food insecurity in Virginia by county 2015. Retrieved from http://www.feedingamerica.org/research/map-the-meal-gap/2015/MMG_AllCounties_CDs_MMG_2015_2/VA_AllCounties_CDs_MMG_2015.pdf

² Kids Count Data Center (2017c). Total child population: After 2011. The Annie E. Casey Foundation. Retrieved from <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/9191-total-child-population-after-2011?loc=48&loct=5#detailed/5/6812-6945/false/1572,1485,1376,1201/any/18213,18214>

Factors Contributing to Food Insecurity

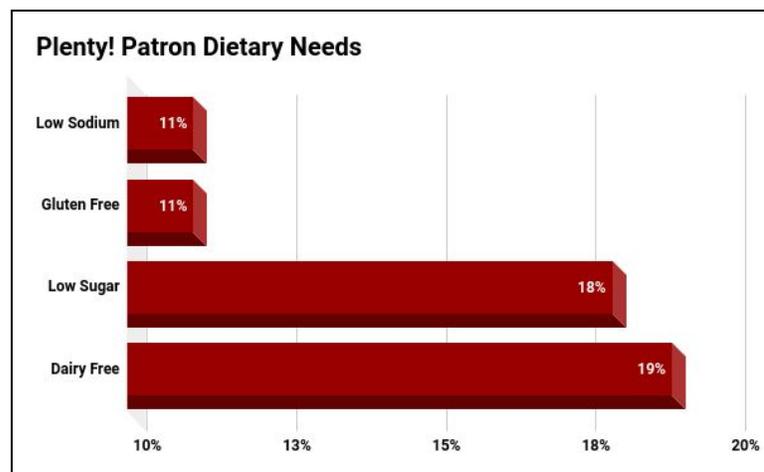
Food insecurity has varying causes and most food insecure individuals are impacted by multiple issues. Food insecurity can be the result of personal circumstances, such as an unanticipated bill, or an illness. It can also be the consequence of community deficits, such as limited local job opportunities, and it can be the result of larger systemic issues, such as receiving insufficient social security benefits.



**Individuals could select more than one type of food insecurity event which they had recently experienced.*

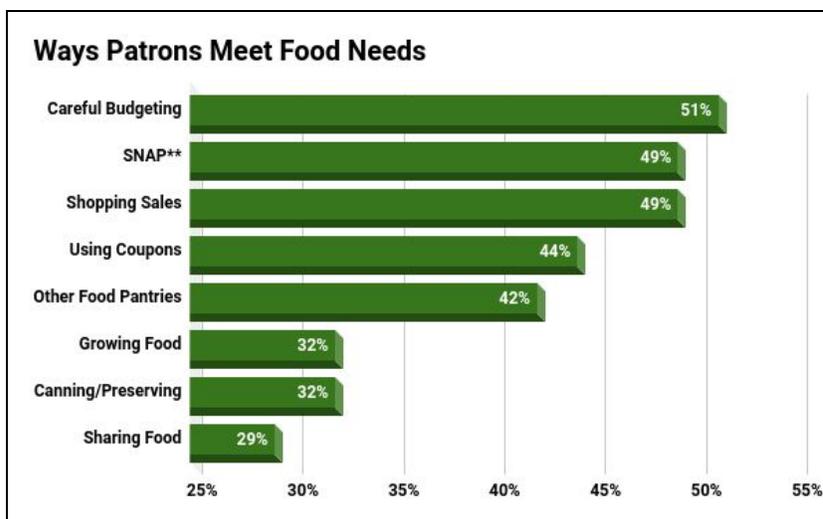
Plenty! Patron Dietary Needs

Food insecurity is correlated with poorer health, and diet related diseases. Many of the more affordable foods that are accessible to food insecure individuals are highly processed and contain significant amounts of added sugar. Only a portion of those who participated in the survey noted a dietary need or restriction. This question was self-reported by the patron and did not require confirmation of a medical evaluation or records.



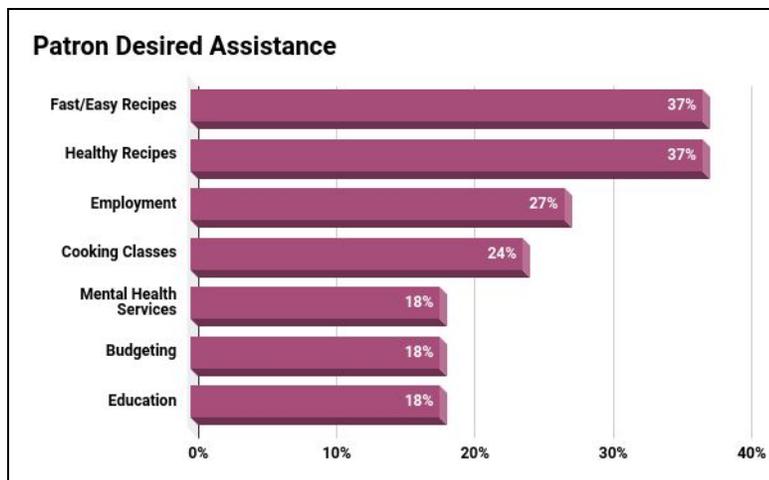
Strategies Patrons Use to Meet Food Needs

Plenty! patrons use a variety of strategies and employ various resources in an effort to meet their food needs. The responses to the survey were in addition to their active participation in Plenty!’s Food Pantry which is available to families and individuals every week.



**Individuals could select more than one type of food insecurity event which they had recently experienced.*

*** USDA Food and Nutrition Service: Maximum Allowable SNAP benefits for a family of three equals \$504 a month or \$5.60 per meal.*

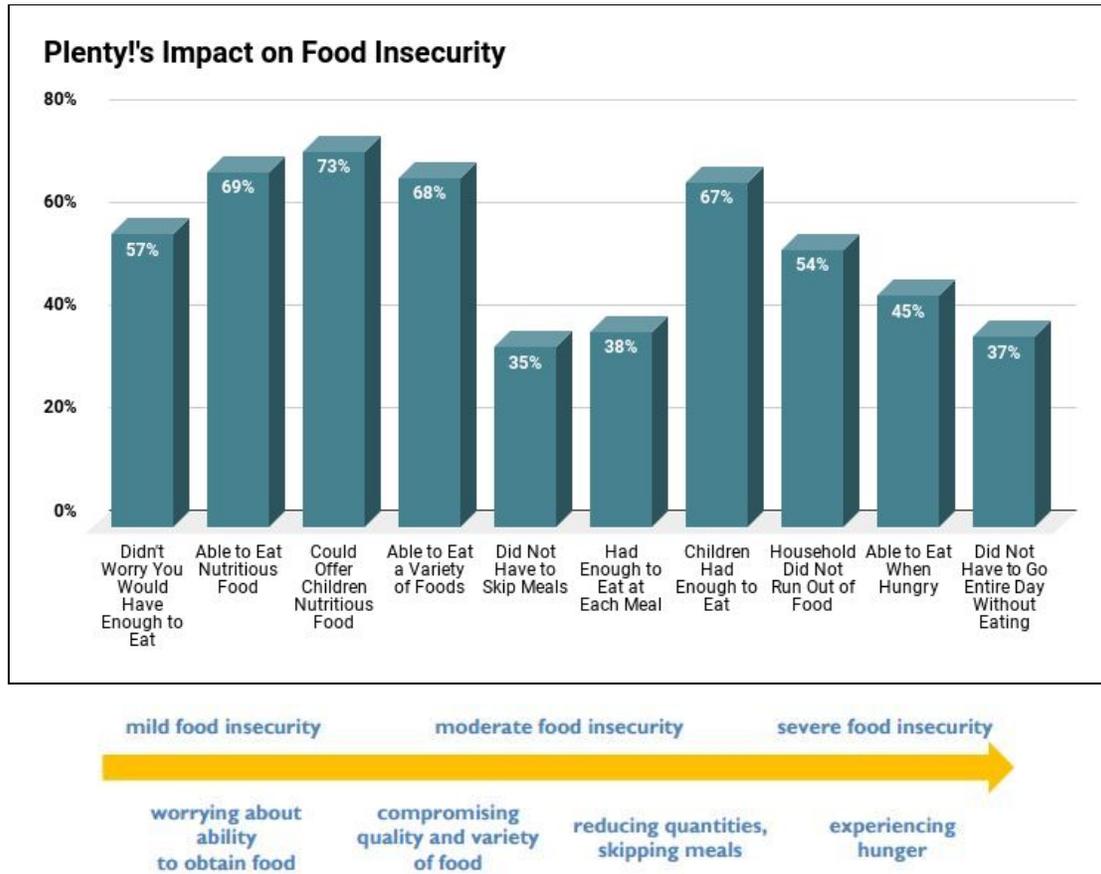


Patrons Requests for Assistance

In an effort to guide program development and community partnerships, Plenty! asked patrons what other needs they would need from organizations, like Plenty!, to assist with their food insecurity.

Plenty!’s Impact on Food Insecurity

As part of the survey, individuals were asked what impact Plenty!’s programs has on their access to food and the quality of the food. These responses were then compared to the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) to evaluate the impact Plenty! has on those families in Floyd County.



**Individuals could select more than one type of food insecurity event which they had recently experienced.*

Areas of Improvement and Direction for Plenty!

As part of Plenty!'s mission and vision, the organization is committed to providing access to fresh healthy, nutrient-dense food to all families and individuals in Floyd County. The introduction of the Plenty! Farm and partnerships with local food businesses, like *Food Lion* and *Riverstone Organic Farm*, has allowed Plenty! to offer a significant amount of healthy choices to patrons who participate in its various food programs. However, since the completion of the survey, there are a number of different areas which Plenty! has identified to improve within its existing programs to increase the amount of accessible healthy food and institute modifications to address the needs being requested by patrons.

- Improved offerings to easy, healthy recipes on Food Pantry items
 - In April 2018, Plenty! published its first online food blog, *Cook'n With Plenty!*, which illustrates how to prepare a healthy, low-cost meal with items obtained from the Plenty! Food Pantry.
 - Copies of healthy recipes for common Food Pantry items are available for patrons.
- Healthy Cooking Classes
 - Twice a year, Plenty! offers free on-site cooking classes to the public. Even though the classes are advertised to patrons, only a small number participate in the classes. Review of the program is being conducted to determine if different times, days and topics would increase the participation of Food Pantry patrons.

Increasing Food Security

Since the causes and consequences of food insecurity are complex, addressing food insecurity requires continued work from multifaceted approaches. While there are many government programs that are helpful, they are not enough. Individuals and communities must work together to help ensure that everyone has access to nutritious food, so we all have the same opportunity to live productive and meaningful lives.