



MEDIA RELEASE

Media release for Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance. For immediate release.

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ARKANSAS NO LONGER TOPS NATIONAL LIST FOR SENIOR HUNGER

LITTLE ROCK, AR (August 21, 2017) –For the past four years Arkansas has ranked #1 in the nation for seniors who face the threat of hunger, but thanks in part to a serious focus on alleviating senior hunger by the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, Department of Human Services and Arkansas’s six Feeding America food banks, that has changed. According to [The State of Senior Hunger in America in 2015](#), a newly released report from Feeding America and the National Foundation to End Senior Hunger, Arkansas — with 19.56 percent of seniors facing the threat of hunger—has dropped more than **5 percentage points** and now ranks fifth behind four other southern states:

Mississippi	24.28%
Louisiana	23.44%
North Carolina	20.73%
South Carolina	19.58%
Arkansas	19.56%

The report found that, 14.7 percent or 9.8 million seniors face the threat of hunger nationally. The proportion of seniors under threat of hunger declined by 1 percentage point between 2014 and 2015 (the most recent year for which data is available), however, the percentage of seniors experiencing hunger has increased by 37 percent since 2001. Seniors living in states in the South and Southwest, those who are

racial or ethnic minorities, those with lower incomes, and those who are younger (ages 60-69) are at the greatest risk of food insecurity. Other national findings include:

- Seniors in rural areas are at higher risk for food insecurity
- The rate of food insecurity for African Americans is substantially higher than for whites
- Seniors whose incomes are between 100% and 200% of the poverty line and those above 200% of the poverty line (for whom fewer government programs such as SNAP and energy assistance are available) are at greater risk of food insecurity than those below the poverty line.
- Seniors age 60-69 are at higher risk of food insecurity than those over 70 years of age and older.

Federal Poverty Guidelines

Household Size	100%	133%	150%	200%	250%	300%	400%
1	\$12,060	\$16,040	\$18,090	\$24,120	\$30,150	\$36,180	\$48,240
2	16,240	21,599	24,360	32,480	40,600	48,720	64,960
3	20,420	27,159	30,630	40,840	51,050	61,260	81,680

<http://familiesusa.org/product/federal-poverty-guidelines>

The Alliance’s SNAP Outreach Team works with volunteers statewide reaching out to seniors at food pantries, in housing authority properties, at low-income energy assistance events and senior centers to help those who qualify for food assistance to navigate the SNAP application process. “We often see eligible seniors who don’t know they can receive food assistance or believe they will be taking food from those who are worse off than they are, so they are opting instead to cut back on medications to afford food,” said Tomiko Townley, older adult and SNAP outreach director. In 2016, 596 (or 26%) of the total

SNAP applications submitted to the Arkansas Department of Human Services through the Alliance's outreach efforts were for individuals age 60 and over.

Hunger is especially dangerous in a vulnerable senior population, increasing their susceptibility to disease and aggravating chronic conditions such as heart disease and depression. While Arkansas seniors may be doing marginally better than they were—although nearly 20% of Arkansas seniors facing the threat of hunger is hardly cause for celebration—the proposed White House budget cuts to SNAP will likely erase the progress made in protecting seniors. The Alliance and Arkansas's six Feeding America food banks, along with hunger relief and senior advocates across the state and around the nation, are working to impress upon Congress the need for **increasing** the food assistance benefits for seniors and relaxing the eligibility requirements so our seniors can afford the nutritious food they need to stay as healthy and independent as possible. “We know that when seniors can afford to buy nutritious food and know how to prepare nutritious meals, they stay healthier longer and have fewer hospital admissions. With so much talk about the high cost of healthcare, increased food assistance for seniors is pretty much a no-brainer,” said Nancy Conley, Alliance communications director

For more information on senior hunger in Arkansas or to find out how you can become a senior outreach volunteer, visit <http://www.arhungeralliance.org/programs/senior-hunger/> or contact Tomiko Townley, older adult & SNAP outreach director, at 501.650.1781.

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About the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance

Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, lead partner in Arkansas for the No Kid Hungry campaign, is a non-profit collaborative network of more than 480 hunger relief organizations across Arkansas. Our founding members include the Arkansas Foodbank in Little Rock, the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas in Jonesboro, Harvest Regional Food Bank in Texarkana, Food Bank of North Central Arkansas in Norfolk, Northwest Arkansas Food Bank in Bethel Heights and River Valley Regional Food Bank in Fort Smith. The Alliance is dedicated to reducing hunger through direct relief, education and advocacy. We invite you to visit www.ARhungeralliance.org for details on hunger relief programs, donor and volunteer opportunities.