



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOOD HARDSHIP ESPECIALLY HIGH FOR ARKANSAS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

LITTLE ROCK, AR (September 21, 2016) - In their June 2016 report, [How Hungry is America](#), the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) found that food hardship had declined nationally from 18.3 percent in 2009 to 16.0 percent by 2015. Improvements in the employment picture, increases in the share of eligible families receiving SNAP benefits, the impact of the Medicaid expansion and the Affordable Care Act were among the causes cited for the nearly three point drop in food hardship. The June report showed Arkansas dropping from 7th to 9th in the national ranking of most food insecure states.

Despite the decline in overall food hardship in the United States and Arkansas in 2015, a closer look at the plight of families with children continues to show they are disproportionately effected by food insecurity. On Tuesday, FRAC released their [analysis](#) of the Gallup data looking specifically at households with and without children. The report showed that 24.9 percent of Arkansas households with children-compared to 16.6 percent of households without children- reported there had been times in the past 12 months when they did not have enough money to buy food. That shocking figure shows that almost one out of every four Arkansas families with children could not always afford to buy the food they needed. So while Arkansas ranks 9th overall, we are third-behind the District of Columbia and Mississippi-in food hardship for families with children.

The report also looked at 101 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) with the highest rates of food hardship for households with children. Three metro areas in Arkansas were in the top 50 with the highest rates of food hardship for families with children.

MSA	Households with Children	Households w/out Children	Rank
Memphis, TN-MS-AR	25.4	20.6	10
Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway, AR	21.4	18.1	33
Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers, AR	19.8	15.1	47

The report concludes that even though the economy has improved, there are still an alarming number of Americans (and Arkansans) who are struggling with food hardship. America has the resources to eliminate hunger, and unless there is the will to do so, the cost-in terms of damage to health, education, early childhood development and productivity-will be too high.

Research shows that participation in federal nutrition programs, such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the USDA Child Nutrition programs providing lunch, breakfast, afterschool and summer meals as well as meals for children in child care programs, support children's health and learning. Additional investment must be made to strengthen these crucial programs.

Recommendations include:

- Broadening eligibility and improving access for those who qualify for these programs
- Higher employment rates and higher wages and benefits
- Stronger income supports through unemployment insurance, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), and refundable tax credits

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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 Norfork, 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.

About FRAC

The Food Research & Action Center is the leading national organization working for more effective public and private policies to eradicate domestic hunger and undernutrition. <http://frac.org/>
