



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Portage Health Foundation Releases Three Request for Proposals Focused on Food and Nutrition

[Hancock, Mich.] As part of the Portage Health Foundation's (PHF) "Stop the Roar of Hunger" food initiative, PHF has researched the ways in which food insecurities and nutrition affect an individual's overall health. PHF has learned from numerous studies, such as the *2015 Western Upper Peninsula Health Needs Assessment* and through many interviews with local farmers, schools, and organizations addressing hunger issues, that food insecurities exist throughout the four-county area and are partly linked to the community's diminished capacity to produce, provide, and procure affordable, quality whole foods and produce. In PHF's four-county service area, the median food insecurity rate was 15.5% in 2014, while the median food insecurity rate for children was 24%, which means that over 8,500 of our residents lacked access to food at some point during the year.¹

Experts generally define food insecurities as a household not having adequate access to nutritious foods due to a lack of financial and/or other resources at any given point during the year. Therefore, food insecurities are not limited to specific socioeconomic groups, but can affect the entire demographic spectrum through such issues as short growing seasons, transportation problems, or limited availability of fresh, affordable whole foods throughout the year. As a result, many individuals and families may consume the most readily available and economical foods, which oftentimes have limited nutritional value.

Lack of proper nutrition can have adverse health effects in individuals of all ages. According to the American Psychological Association, undernutrition during pregnancy can increase the risk of premature birth, which places a baby at an increased risk for developing learning problems. Infants to 3-year-olds who receive too little energy, protein, and nutrients may be at risk for lasting deficits in cognitive, social, and emotional development, while school-aged children who experience severe hunger may be at an increased risk for developing chronic health conditions, psychiatric distress, behavioral problems, and poor self-esteem. Fortunately, improved nutrition, increased environmental stimulation, emotional support, and secure attachment to parents/caregivers can potentially compensate for early undernutrition in children.²

Food insecurities also put teens, adults, and seniors at risk for health conditions. For adolescents, food insecurities may be associated with mood, anxiety, behavior, and substance abuse disorders, while in adults it may be associated with cardiovascular risks.³ In senior populations, food insecure individuals may require greater consideration towards their health and medical needs because they have lower intakes of vital nutrients in their diet, which may put them at increased risks for depression, heart attacks, asthma, and congestive heart failure.⁴

In an effort to reduce the negative effects of food insecurities, hunger, and poor nutrition, PHF has begun identifying funding strategies to address the community's awareness to food and the critical impact it has on individual and population health. PHF's multi-faceted approach focuses on community education, access, and affordability. For this initial round of funding, PHF has identified two main objectives: (1) to

create greater awareness throughout the community to the role food plays in overall population health, and (2) to develop and execute the first-steps toward helping to provide nutritious food to people who may be food insecure.

Based on these objectives, PHF has released three RFPs focused on inclusive educational and experiential programming that support healthy eating, nutritional education, physical activity, and inclusive communal meals for all ages. In each of these RFPs, emphasis on improving overall community health and food awareness, inclusion, reduction of stigma, and access to healthy foods is primary. PHF believes that as a community working together, we can find meaningful and impactful solutions to address health issues associated with the absence of a healthy diet.

RFP #1: Children’s Health – Educational & Experiential Activities Designed to Support Healthy Eating and Physical Activity in Children (ages 0-12)

RFP #2: Community Health – Educational & Experiential Activities Designed to Support Healthy Eating and Physical Activity across the Generations (all ages)

RFP #3: Together at the Table – Community Meals Focused on Nutrition, Food Awareness, Inclusion, and Socialization (all ages)

Please visit PHF’s website (www.phfgive.org) and download an RFP application, which contains specific information and criteria for each RFP.

PHF will be hosting a community-wide RFP meeting on November 2, 2016 at 9 a.m. for interested applicants at the Ramada Inn (99 Navy Street) in Hancock, MI. At this meeting, PHF staff will share specific information regarding each RFP, what they are seeking from these grant proposals, and how PHF and the community can collaborate to address the region’s food insecurities.

Applications are due no later than 3:30 p.m. on Friday, December 2, 2016. Interested parties may download an application from PHF’s website (www.phfgive.org), request a grant application packet by contacting 906.523.5920, or by stopping by PHF’s offices located at:

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The Portage Health Foundation is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that receives and contributes charitable donations in order to support the health needs of the community through enhanced philanthropy and community collaboration in Baraga, Houghton, Keweenaw, and Ontonagon counties.

¹ “Map the Meal Gap 2016: Overall Food Insecurity in Michigan by County in 2014,” and “Map the Meal Gap 2016: Child Food Insecurity in Michigan by County in 2014,” Feeding America, accessed October 5, 2016, <http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/our-research/map-the-meal-gap/data-by-county-in-each-state.html>.

² “Effects of Poverty, Hunger and Homelessness on Children and Youth,” American Psychological Association, accessed October 20, 2015, <http://www.apa.org/pi/families/poverty.aspx>.

³ Katie A. McLaughlin et al., “Food Insecurity and Mental Disorders in a National Sample of U.S. Adolescents,” *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 51, no. 12 (December 2012): 1293; and Hilary K. Seligman et al., “Food Insecurity is Associated with Chronic Disease among Low-Income NHANES Participants,” *The Journal of Nutrition*, 140, no. 2 (February 2010): 304, doi: 10.3945/jn.109.112573.

⁴ “Senior Hunger,” Feeding America, accessed October 5, 2016, <http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/impact-of-hunger/senior-hunger/senior-hunger-fact-sheet.html>.

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