

# Hunger in Oklahoma

Whether in Oklahoma or elsewhere in the world, hunger rarely occurs because there is simply not enough food; rather, hunger occurs because families and individuals cannot afford to buy food. The roots of Oklahoma's hunger problem are embedded in the plots of poverty amidst our pastures of plenty.

Here is a brief snapshot of the hungry in Oklahoma:

- According to the USDA, Oklahoma ranks eighth in the nation in the number of people per capita who are hungry. We are seventh in the nation in those who are food insecure, which is defined as a limited or uncertain access to an adequate diet, oftentimes reflected in skipped meals, reduced food intake or an uncertainty about being able to feed all household members.
- In Oklahoma, 28 percent of children under the age of five and 23 percent under the age of 18 live in poverty. The percentage of Oklahoma children living in poverty increased by 48 percent in 2006. Now one in every five of our children lives in poverty and is at risk of going to bed hungry.
- In 2007 almost 600,000 Oklahomans lived in poverty. The poverty level in 2007 is \$20,650 for a family of four.
- Of the elderly who receive food through Oklahoma's Food Bank System, 32 percent report having to choose between buying food or paying for medicine or medical care.
- Since 1999, the percentage of families living in poverty has increased in 30 of the state's 39 most populous counties.
- Of households experiencing hunger, less than 20 percent are classified as unemployed. More than one-third are disabled and/or retired, while the remaining 46 percent have at least one working member.
- According to a 2007 study by the Sodexo Foundation, Oklahoma loses an estimated \$1.4 billion each year from hunger through illness, increased illness and decreased academic achievement alone.

Oklahoma Food Bank Network

**Hunger**  
is not **OK**

More information on hunger in Oklahoma is available through Oklahoma's Food Bank Network. Visit [www.hungerinoklahoma.org](http://www.hungerinoklahoma.org)