



 **Boulder Valley** School District  
*Excellence and Equity*

## **BVSD Research on Gaps in Feeding Young Children in the City of Boulder**



**Gamm Initiative Nourishing Infants and Toddlers**

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## **Section I. Introduction/Statement of Purpose**

In July and August of 2015, Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) Food Services Department conducted this research study to identify public and private not-for-profit programs in Boulder, CO, that feed preschool children of poor families, in order to find the gaps in these existing programs.

Relevant data and statistics are listed in Section III, and are presented in order of State, County, School District, and City level. Gaps in current nutrition coverage for families with young children are examined in Section IV.

Through communication with existing organizations and BVSD departments, as well as available state and county data, we sought to determine both present and future opportunities for further intervention in nutritional status of pre-school aged children in the City of Boulder. This includes communication strategies to promote the use of existing resources. These findings are presented in Section IV.

Appendices I and II include information on the Free and Reduced Price Meals (FRPM) eligibility percentages for the City of Boulder Pre-K programs, and income eligibility limits for Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) and FRPM programs. Appendix III is a list of the programs that currently exist to serve the food and nutrition needs of families with young children in the City of Boulder.

## Section II. Executive Summary

In July and August of 2015, Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) Food Services Department conducted research to identify public and private not-for-profit programs in Boulder, CO that feed preschool children of poor families, in order to find the gaps in these existing programs. Through communication with existing organizations and BVSD departments, as well as available state and county data, we sought to identify food insecurity statistics and to identify and determine both present and future opportunities for further intervention in nutritional status of pre-school aged children in the City of Boulder.

A key finding in this research is the startling statistic that 43% of the Food Insecure Children in Boulder County are likely *ineligible* for the federal Free and Reduced Price Meal Program or other federally funded nutrition assistance programs – due to household incomes 185%+ of poverty level. Given the federal income levels, these families would not qualify for government food assistance programs such as SNAP or WIC, yet their households are still ‘food-insecure’. This indicates a higher level of need than solely indicated by the participation numbers in existing food assistance programs. In addition, the federal income eligibility limits, such as those established by the USDA to qualify families for SNAP, WIC, and FRPM, do not take into account local variations in childcare and housing costs.

As a result of this research, BVSD Food Services recommends the following possible approaches to reduce food insecurity for families with young children in the City of Boulder:

1. Increase outreach and awareness of the programs and resources that already exist. BVSD has an opportunity to deliver important food information to parents and to publicize programs that feed hungry children (see Appendix III).
2. Bring food directly to the schools through backpack (or bag) programs. The Gamm Initiative Nourishing Infants and Toddlers (GINTI), recently piloted in three BVSD schools, is a proven way to provide nutrition options to children in need during times when schools are closed (weekends or holiday breaks.) Additionally, a case study of the GINIT program recommends furthering local partnerships between BVSD and existing food services organizations such as Community Food Share CFS to obtain a continued donation of nutritious foods, through a bag program, at no cost.

BVSD Food Services intends to seek funding and opportunities for collaborations to meet this growing need to eliminate childhood hunger locally and aims to be a model to inspire such programs nationwide.

## Section III. State, County, BVSD, and City of Boulder Statistics

### State-Level Statistics

- Colorado has the third-fastest growing rate of child poverty in the nation. Among Colorado children, those under the age of 6 are most likely to be in poverty, with **1 in 5** living in poverty during 2012. They also are the most at risk of living in homes without enough food<sup>1</sup>.

### County Level Statistics

- The food insecurity rate in Boulder County is **13.9%**. The food insecurity rate among children in Boulder County is **17.8%**<sup>2</sup>.
- **24.7%** of all children in Boulder County (encompassing both BVSD and St. Vrain Valley School District) qualify for FRPM lunch programs<sup>3</sup>.
- **43%** of the food insecure children in Boulder County are likely *ineligible* for the federal FRPM Program due to income (Family Incomes at 185% + of poverty level).

### Boulder Valley School District Statistics

The percentage of students in BVSD who were eligible for free school meals (family income  $\leq$  130% of federal poverty) increased substantially between 2001 and 2013, from **9.3%** to **16.0%**<sup>4</sup>.

- Between 2010 and 2013, the percentage of students eligible for FRPM (family income  $\leq$  185% of federal poverty) remained stable in Boulder Valley School District (**18.3%** in October 2013), after increasing almost every year between 2003 and 2010 .
- As of end of the 2014-2015 school year, the percentage of students eligible for FRPM in BVSD was **20.8%**. This represents a total of **6,181** students out of a total active enrollment of **29,648**<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Status of Children Report 2014 Colorado Children's Campaign, p.18

<sup>2</sup> Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap, Data by County, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Status of Children Report 2015 Colorado Children's Campaign – Statistics by County.

<sup>4</sup> "The Status of Children in Boulder County" p. 10

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Dolores Campos-Herzfeld, Accounts Specialist, Food Services, BVSD.

## City of Boulder Statistics

- According to the most recent US Census Bureau statistics, approximately **22.8%** of families in the City of Boulder are living in poverty, as compared to **14.5%** nationally<sup>6</sup>.
- Of the 103,166 people living in the city of Boulder, **4.1%** are children under the age of 5. This represents approximately **4,230** children age 5 or under<sup>7</sup>.
- The Women Infants and Children (WIC) Program, which offers food assistance and nutrition education to pregnant women, women who have recently given birth, and infants and children under the age of 5 years old, currently provides services to a total of **563** families in the city of Boulder. This represents an estimated **58%** of the approximately 970 families estimated to be eligible for WIC within the city of Boulder<sup>8</sup>.
- BVSD currently operates five Pre-K programs in the City of Boulder – Creekside, Columbine, University Hill, Heatherwood and Mapleton. In 2014-2015, the number of FRPM Pre-K students in these City of Boulder schools totaled **136** students, out of a total number of **408** enrolled. *(See Appendix I for a table showing these numbers by individual Pre-K site.)*
- Private and public daycare facilities in the City of Boulder provide meals to children during the school day. Specifically, 15 licensed child care centers, 2 Head Start centers, and 6 family day care home providers currently participate with the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) in the City of Boulder.<sup>9</sup>



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<sup>6</sup> US Census Data, 2013.

<sup>7</sup> US Census Data, 2013.

<sup>8</sup>Phone Interview with WIC Manager Melinda Morris, 8/11/15.

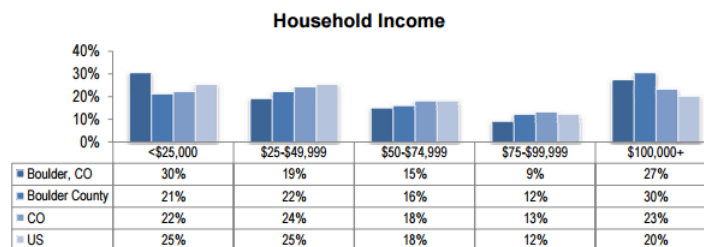
<sup>9</sup> Email data from CDPHE staff regarding Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) - Data request.

## Section IV. Gaps + Areas for Further Research

A telling Boulder County statistic<sup>10</sup> regarding the gap in nutrition assistance for families with young children is this: 43% of the food insecure children in Boulder County are likely *ineligible* for the federal FRPM Program or other federally funded nutrition assistance programs – due to household incomes 185%+ of poverty level. Given the federal income levels, these families would not qualify for government food assistance programs such as SNAP or WIC, yet their households are still ‘food-insecure’. This indicates a higher level of need than solely indicated by the participation numbers in existing food assistance programs.

The federal income eligibility limits, such as those established by the USDA to qualify families for SNAP, WIC, and FRPM, do not take into account local variations in child care and housing costs. For example, at an average cost of \$334 a week, or \$17,368 a year, the cost of center-based infant care in Boulder is 74% of the income of a family of four living at the federal poverty level<sup>11</sup>. According to June 2015 figures, Boulder is also the most expensive rental housing market in Colorado, with a median rent of \$1,680 for a two-bedroom apartment<sup>12</sup>. Homeownership costs have risen dramatically in Boulder, rising 16% from 2005-2012 compared to an average of 5% increase for the rest of Boulder County<sup>13</sup>. The substantial costs of child care and housing in Boulder may limit the percentage of household income spent on food, an area of possible future research.

A 2011 study determined that 49% of the households in Boulder earn less than \$49,999 a year, an income level that would qualify a household of five or fewer individuals for the Free and Reduced Meals Program. However, the same study identified another set of 15% of Boulder households that earn between \$50,000-\$74,999 a year, and any households in this income range that represent a family of four or fewer would be ineligible for any federal food assistance due to monthly income<sup>14</sup>. These families outside of the eligibility range for food assistance may represent a “second level” of food insecurity within the City of Boulder.



US Census, 2010 American Community Survey

<sup>10</sup> Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap, 2013.

<sup>11</sup> “The Status of Children in Boulder County”, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> June 2015 Colorado Rental Price Monitor.

<sup>13</sup> Boulder Housing Market Analysis, July 2013, p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> See Appendix III.

## Section V. Opportunities

One approach to reduce food insecurity for families with young children is to increase outreach and awareness of the programs and resources that already exist. Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) has an opportunity to deliver important food information to parents, and to publicize programs that feed hungry children (see Appendix III). BVSD Food Services is also an active part of the Healthy Living and Active Living team (HEAL) that is developing ways for existing organizations within Boulder County to collaborate for greater effect on food security and nutrition needs.

According to Anne Shanahan of Community Food Share (CFS), pre-school families are often not aware of resources available to them<sup>15</sup>. The Hunger Relief Agencies are consistently indicating to CFS the need for assistance publicizing their programs. For example, CFS would like to have a greater presence at BVSD Back to School Nights – with outreach tables that enable them to connect their organizations with families in need. This would allow for more sharing of information about the various food banks, programs and services available to families. A stronger partnership between CFS (and their partner organizations) with BVSD Food Services would help support this goal.



Another opportunity to relieve food insecurity would be to bring food directly to the schools. CFS already has mobile pantries at schools during the summer, and this model could possibly be brought into the school year at high-need schools.

Backpack (or bag) programs are a proven way to provide nutrition options to children in need during times when schools are closed, like over weekends or holiday breaks. The Gamm Initiative Nourishing Infants and Toddlers (GINIT) provided Pre-K lunch meals to students in three high-need BVSD elementary schools, and the pilot initiative also funded a bag program in 2014-2015 to send Pre-K children in high need schools home with food over the weekends.

BVSD is currently exploring the continuation of the Nourishing Toddler’s Pilot Program, as a result of the findings of this report and the case study of the pilot year of the initiative. Offering the Pre-K lunch program to BVSD schools with a high percentage of

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<sup>15</sup> Phone Interview with Anne Shanahan, Community Food Share 8/9/15.



FRPM student eligibility is cost-neutral, and will be continued in the 2015-2016 school year. A case study of GINIT indicated that the average cost of \$10.47 for the actual contents of each bag would be a hurdle to further replication and expansion of the bag program<sup>16</sup>. In order to subsidize the continued cost of goods to supply these backpacks after a pilot program in 2014-2015, BVSD Food Services is exploring a partnership with CFS to obtain a continued donation of nutritious foods at no cost. If the partnership comes to fruition and the retail food packages and basic produce items can be donated by CFS, it will require a fundraising effort of approximately \$6,000 per elementary school to continue the bag program. This amount will cover the cost of the bags, the Harvest of the Month produce item and recipe cards, and the extra staff labor associated with the bag program.

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<sup>16</sup> “The Gamm Initiative: Nourishing Toddler’s Pilot”, p. 16.

**Appendix I:**

<b>Pre-K Program Site</b>	<b>Pre-K Enrollment (2014-2015)</b>	<b>Number of Students with F/R Lunch Status (2014-2015)</b>	<b>% of F/R Students as % of Pre-K Enrollment (City of Boulder)</b>
Creekside	53	22	42%
Columbine	54	34	63%
Uni Hill	50	30	60%
Mapleton	184	38	21%
Heatherwood	32	12	38%
<b>TOTAL NUMBERS</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>33%</b>

**Appendix II:**

**Income Eligibility Requirements for Food Assistance in Boulder County + BVSD**

- Table I: Maximum Monthly Gross Income Levels to be Eligible for Food Assistance in Boulder County (SNAP Program)<sup>17</sup>:

<b>Family Size</b>	<b>Maximum Monthly Gross Income for Eligibility</b>
Family of One	\$1,265
Family of Two	\$1,705
Family of Three	\$2,144
Family of Four	\$2,584
Family of Five	\$3,024
Family of Six	\$3,464

- Table II: Maximum Monthly Income Levels to be Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch in 2015-2016 (185% of Poverty Line or Below)<sup>18</sup>:

<b>Family Size</b>	<b>Maximum Monthly Gross Income for Eligibility</b>
Family of One	\$1,815
Family of Two	\$2,456
Family of Three	\$3,098
Family of Four	\$3,739
Family of Five	\$4,380
Family of Six	\$5,022

- Table III: Average Household Income, City of Boulder (2010)<sup>19</sup>

<b>% of Households</b>	<b>Yearly Income</b>	<b>Monthly Income Range</b>
30%	<\$25,000	<\$2083.33
19%	\$25,000-\$49,999	\$2083.33-\$4166.58
15%	\$50,000-\$74,999	\$4166.66-\$6249.92
9%	\$75,000-\$99,999	\$6250-\$8333.25
27%	\$100,000+	\$8333.33+

<sup>17</sup> Boulder County Housing & Human Services, Income Limits for Food Assistance, Web.

<sup>18</sup> USDA/FNS Income Eligibility Guidelines 2015-2016.

<sup>19</sup> Demographic Profile: Boulder Colorado, December 2011, p.6.

## Appendix III:

### Existing Hunger Relief Resources and Organizations in Boulder, CO

#### **Community Food Share**

<http://communityfoodshare.org>

650 S. Taylor Avenue, Louisville

Community Food Share (CFS) provides food to the following organizations, who in turn distribute it to their clients. All food distributed by CFS and the nonprofit organizations they serve is distributed free of charge. They also operate in-house client distribution programs including:

- **Feeding Families:** Weekly groceries for low-income families with children. CFS staff help families choose the food they need. (Wednesdays 10:00 a.m. - 3:45 p.m., Thursdays and Fridays 8:30 a.m. - 1:45 p.m.)
- **TEFAP Monthly Food Program:** Groceries for low-income individuals and families
- **Emergency Food Boxes:** Available Monday through Friday upon request
- **Summer Mobile Food Pantries** (currently not offered in the City of Boulder, see opportunities)

### **CFS Partner Organizations that Serve Children in the City of Boulder<sup>20</sup>**

#### **MEALS**

**Meals on Wheels:** Hot lunches delivered for sliding scale fees – all ages eligible

**Boulder Shelter for the Homeless:** Serves breakfast for all (year round) and evening meal served to overnight shelter clients only (October-April)

**Community Table First United Methodist Church:** Serves evening meal on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday

**Mt. View United Methodist Church:** Serves Tuesday evening meal

**St. John's Episcopal Church:** Serves Friday evening meal

**Colorado Friendship / Meals on the Street:** Serves dinner on Sundays at the Justice Center parking lot (6<sup>th</sup> & Canyon)

**Sunday Soup Program:** Lunch on Sunday prepared by different churches in the city of Boulder

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<sup>20</sup> "Where to find Food Assistance in Boulder County" Print. Published as a public service flyer by Community Food Share, 2015.

**Lamb's Ministry:** Serves breakfast on Thursdays at First Presbyterian Church and Thursday and Saturday lunch year-round

**Bridge House:** Serves breakfast Monday through Friday at their day shelter

### **FOOD PANTRIES**

#### **Emergency Family Assistance Association (EFAA) Food Pantry**

**Harvest of Hope Food Pantry:** Provides a grocery store-style, client-choice experience, where individuals and families can shop for supplemental food. They offer separate shopping hours for those with kitchens and those without. Those without kitchens are permitted to shop daily, Monday through Friday, for a meal item, snacks and a beverage for the day. Those with kitchens and refrigeration are permitted to shop once a week.

### **GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS**

**Women, Infants and Children (WIC):** Food assistance for pregnant/breastfeeding women, infants and children to age five

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP):** Food assistance formerly known as Food Stamps Boulder

**Free or Reduced School Lunch Program (FRPM):** School lunches at a free or reduced price, for children from low-income families. Parents inquire at their child's school or call Boulder Valley School District Food Services directly. The State of Colorado established funding through a series Senate Bills (07-059, 08-123, 09-033, and 14-1156) to eliminate the \$.30 payment for breakfast meals at all grade levels and the \$.40 payment for school lunch meals in grades PreK-5, effectively making all school meals "Free" for any PreK-5 family that qualifies at the "Reduced" Income level or below.

**Direct Certification<sup>21</sup>:** Determining children eligible for free meals benefits based on documentation obtained directly from the appropriate State or local agency or other authorized individuals. Direct certification of a child's eligibility status should not involve the household. The communication exchange should be between an appropriate agency and the school district.

**Harvest Bucks Program:** Beginning in August 2014, Boulder County Parks and Open Space and the City of Boulder Human Services Departments each contributed funding to allow SNAP participants to double their SNAP spending dollars at Boulder and Longmont Farmer's Markets<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup>Eligibility Manual for School Meals – Determining and Verifying Eligibility, p. 12.

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.bouldercounty.org/apps/newsroom/templates/bc12.aspx?articleid=4151&zoneid=5> (accessed 8/11/15)

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