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UPDATED REPORT SHOWS CHILDREN IN NEW MEXICO ARE MORE LIKELY TO FACE HUNGER THAN OVERALL POPULATION

Rates reflect New Mexico is worst among all states for childhood hunger

Albuquerque, NM – May 2, 2019 – Roadrunner Food Bank of New Mexico announced the release of *Map the Meal Gap 2019*, the latest report by Feeding America® on hunger and the cost of food at both the county and congressional district level. Currently, it is the only study that provides food insecurity data at the county level.

Map the Meal Gap 2019 revealed that New Mexico ranks among the worst in the nation for childhood hunger. One in four children is at risk, or 24.1 percent. Additionally, it shows 15.8 percent or 324,000 people in New Mexico are at-risk of hunger.

Map the Meal Gap confirms that hunger exists in every county in Roadrunner Food Bank's service area. Hunger rates range from a low of 9.3 percent of the overall population in Guadalupe County up to 26 percent of the overall population in McKinley County for the overall population. Nationwide, the average hunger rate across all counties is 12.5 percent. New Mexico ranks sixth worst among all states when looking at the entire overall population.

"There isn't a single state or county in America free from child hunger, and it is within our collective power to change that and ensure that today's children are tomorrow's leaders," said Claire Babineaux-Fontenot, chief executive officer of Feeding America. "The Feeding America nationwide network of food banks is investing in our nation's future by helping to provide over 146 million meals to children every year. Still, *Map the Meal Gap* highlights that more must be done. Together food banks, corporations, policymakers, donors, volunteers and advocates can solve hunger."

"I encourage everyone to visit the website, map.feedingamerica.org to find out what hunger looks like in their community and get involved to be part of the solution," Babineaux-Fontenot continued. "One way is to tell Congress to invest in kids during Child Nutrition Reauthorization legislation and increase access to food for kids during the summer. Your voice matters, and we can make a difference."

In New Mexico, children are much worse off and more likely to experience hunger compared to the overall population in the state and across the U.S. Rates in the state range from a low of 17.1 percent of children at-risk of hunger in Los Alamos County to a high of 33.5 percent of children at-risk of hunger in McKinley County. The national hunger rate for children is 17 percent. New Mexico has nearly twice the childhood hunger rate compared to the national hunger rate in the U.S.

The analysis also finds that a percentage of New Mexicans in food insecure households are likely to be ineligible for federal nutrition assistance. Under current program requirements, many low-income households make a little much to qualify for programs such as SNAP (food stamps). These households must rely heavily on charitable food assistance programs like Roadrunner's statewide hunger relief network.

"Federal nutrition programs provide an important source of meals for those with extremely low-incomes in our state. However, many fall into a gap. On paper these households technically are still in poverty, but make just a little too much to qualify for SNAP benefits. If they do qualify, it may only be a small amount," said Mag Strittmatter, president and CEO of Roadrunner Food Bank. "The households in this gap are often the most food insecure and count on charitable food assistance programs. There is no other resource for these family to turn to for help, and our statewide charitable hunger network provides the emergency food they need to for their family to escape hunger."

Roadrunner Food Bank of New Mexico is a member of Feeding America's hunger-relief network comprised of 200 food banks and 60,000 food pantries and meal programs that together provides food assistance to more than 40 million people in the U.S. struggling with hunger. In New Mexico, Roadrunner distributed more than 32 million pounds of food last year through a statewide hunger-relief network made up of hundreds of food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters and regional food banks. It also provided food through specialized hunger initiatives which take place in schools, senior centers, low-income senior housing sites and "pop-up" mobile distributions which work similar to a farmer market style distribution where clients can select food items that meet their family's dietary needs.

Top Five NM Counties for Child Hunger

McKinley County – 33.5 percent
Luna County – 33.4 percent
Cibola County – 30.4 percent
Catron County – 30.4 percent
Sierra County – 27.8 percent

Top Five NM Counties for Overall Hunger

McKinley County – 26 percent
Luna County – 20.7 percent
Cibola County – 19.8 percent
San Juan County – 19.6 percent
Sierra County – 19 percent

Map the Meal Gap 2019 uses data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and food price data and analysis provided by Nielsen, a global provider of information and insights. The study is supported by [The Howard G. Buffett Foundation](#), [Conagra Brands Foundation](#) and [Nielsen](#).

The study's findings underscore the extent of need that remains in communities in New Mexico and across the U.S., despite national measures from the USDA that indicate overall improvement.

Dr. Craig Gundersen, Professor of Agricultural and Consumer Economics at the University of Illinois, Executive Director of the National Soybean Research Laboratory and a member of Feeding America's Technical Advisory Group is the lead researcher of *Map the Meal Gap 2019*.

This is the ninth consecutive year that Feeding America has conducted the *Map the Meal Gap* study.

The *Map the Meal Gap 2019* [interactive map](#) allows policymakers, state agencies, corporate partners, food banks and advocates to develop integrated strategies to fight hunger on a community level.

A summary of the findings, an interactive map of the United States, and the full report are available at map.feedingamerica.org.

Join the conversation about *Map the Meal Gap 2019* on Twitter using [#MealGap](#).

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About Roadrunner® Food Bank

New Mexico is ranked as one of the hungriest and most poverty-stricken states in the nation. Roadrunner® Food Bank, a Feeding America member, is the largest non-profit dedicated to solving hunger in New Mexico. The Food Bank serves as a distribution hub and provides food to hundreds of affiliated partners around the state including food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, and regional food banks. Roadrunner also distributes food through its own specialized programs helping children, families and seniors at schools, low-income senior housing sites and senior centers. Last year, the Food Bank distributed more than 32 million pounds of food, helping 70,000 hungry people every week through a statewide hunger-relief network. For more information on solving hunger in New Mexico, visit www.rafb.org, or follow us on social media: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or [Instagram](#).

About Feeding America

Feeding America® is the largest hunger-relief organization in the United States. Through a network of 200 food banks and 60,000 food pantries and meal programs, we provide meals to more than 46 million people each year. Feeding America also supports programs that prevent food waste and improve food security among the people we serve; educates the public about the problem of hunger; and advocates for legislation that protects people from going hungry. Visit www.feedingamerica.org, find us on [Facebook](#) or follow us on [Twitter](#).