



# 2019 Community Food Assessment

# Table of Contents

---

|    |   |    |                  |
|----|---|----|------------------|
| 02 | ABOUT THE COMMUNITY FOOD ASSESSMENT           | 08 | SURVEY DATA      |
| 03 | DICKINSON COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS                 | 14 | FOCUS GROUP DATA |
| 04 | SNAP INFORMATION                              | 16 | CALL TO ACTION   |
| 05 | WIC INFORMATION                               |    |                  |
| 06 | FREE/REDUCED PRICE LUNCH AND BACKPACK PROGRAM |    |                  |
| 07 | FOOD PANTRIES AND COMMUNITY TABLES            |    |                  |



## About the Community Food Assessment

---

Dickinson County has a population of 17,046 people. According to recent data, about 10% of Dickinson County is food insecure (Map the Meal gap, 2016). What does this mean exactly? Food insecurity is defined as limited access to food due to lack of money or other resources. This number has been fairly steady for Dickinson County for the last 5 years. In this Community Food Assessment (CFA), the goal was to learn more about food insecurity in the area and how people feel about food in general. Through a combination of secondary data, a survey that was filled out by over 200 residents of Dickinson County, and a focus group, we were able to identify what is currently working well and what can be improved to address food insecurity in the future.



# Dickinson County Demographics

---

- Population - 17,046 people
- Median family income - \$74,370
- Median age - 49 years old
- The leading cause of death in Dickinson County is cardiovascular disease.

## Dickinson County Insurance

Private Insurance



Public Insurance



No Insurance



*Data from Community Commons*

## Misc. Demographics

White/Non-Hispanic



Graduated High School



Low Income



*Data from Community Commons*





# SNAP Data for Dickinson County

*Data from Iowa Department of Public Health*



The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) serves as the first line of defense against hunger and provides crucial support to needy households and to those making transition from welfare to work. Participants receive a card they can use for food purchase. In order to qualify for SNAP, participants must meet eligibility guidelines, which are set annually by the county. These guidelines are set based on income and size of the household.

| Year | Average Monthly Benefit in Dickinson County | Average Number of Monthly Recipients |
|------|---|--------------------------------------|
| 2018 | \$97.19                                     | 1,146                                |
| 2017 | \$99.88                                     | 1,208                                |
| 2016 | \$103.74                                    | 1,254                                |
| 2015 | \$98.63                                     | 1,227                                |

The average benefit decreased during 2015-2018 by 1.46%  
The average number of monthly recipients increased during 2015-2018 by 6.6%

# WIC Data for Dickinson County

*Data from the Kids Count Data Center*

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a supplemental nutrition program for babies and children under the age of 5, pregnant women, breastfeeding women, and women who have had a baby in the last 6 months. The four pillars of WIC are healthy food, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and healthcare referrals. As long as one person in the household qualifies for WIC, the whole household can participate in the program.



*Participants in Dickinson County*

| Year | Population Participating |
|------|--------------------------|
| 2012 | 19.1%                    |
| 2013 | 15.7%                    |
| 2014 | 17%                      |
| 2015 | 16.4%                    |
| 2016 | 15.7%                    |
| 2017 | 15%                      |

# Free/Reduced-Price Lunch and Backpack Program

*Data from the Federal Register*



The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a federally assisted meal program that provides meals at schools to those children whose families meet the requirements laid out each year by the USDA. The program was developed to reduce the strain of meal costs on families and insure all kids that attend school are fed.

The Dickinson County Backpack Program puts together and distributes backpacks to students in need every Friday so they can have food over the weekend. Backpacks often consist of juice packs, granola bars, milk, and spaghetti, to name a few examples. There are 60 participants in the Spirit Lake Community School District and 30 participants in the Okobojo Community School District.

Percent of Children in Free-Reduced Lunch Program:

|                  | 2013   | 2014  | 2015  | 2016  | 2017  |
|------------------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Iowa             | 40.30% | 41.1% | 41%   | 41.8% | 41.3% |
| Dickinson County | 28.9%  | 30.4% | 31.6% | 29.1% | 29.6% |



# Local Food Pantries and Community Tables

---

Dickinson County has 10 food pantries and community tables in which residents can participate. Each provides food to those suffering from food insecurity in Dickinson County, and mainly operates 1-2 days a month depending on the location. The food that is available at the pantries and tables varies each week depending on donations and what is available. A comprehensive list of Dickinson County Food Pantries/Community Tables and their hours and locations is listed in the Dickinson County Resource Guide (<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/dickinson/county-resource-guide>). The Community Table is a collaborative effort between the YMCA and Dickinson County Ministerial Association, which provides a meal to anyone who wishes to come. The Food Pantries provide groceries at no cost to the participant.

---

# Survey Data and Summaries

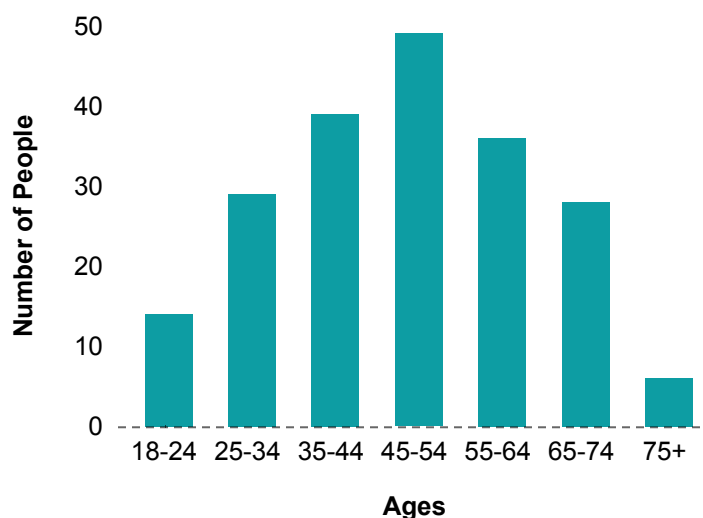
---

In July 2019, a survey was sent to Dickinson County residents in an effort to include a large demographic with a wide range in income, ethnicity, and age. Surveys were distributed via social media, the YMCA and Chamber e-mail list, and at local food pantries. Overall, 209 people participated in the survey. These results were analyzed. On July 22, 2019 a focus group was held to go in depth on comments that were left by survey participants. The focus group was held at Lakes Regional Healthcare with 10 total participants representing various county and state organizations. Following is a summary of some of the most relevant survey data and focus group comments. A full version of the survey with questions and responses can be found in Appendix A.

## Survey Demographics

---

Age of Survey Participants

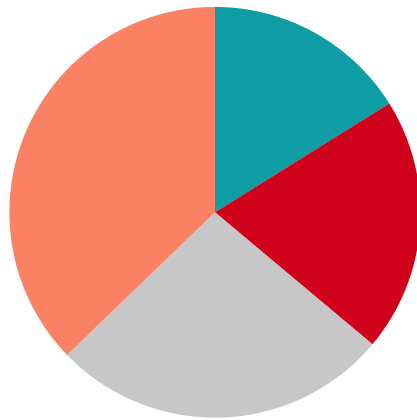




# Survey Demographics

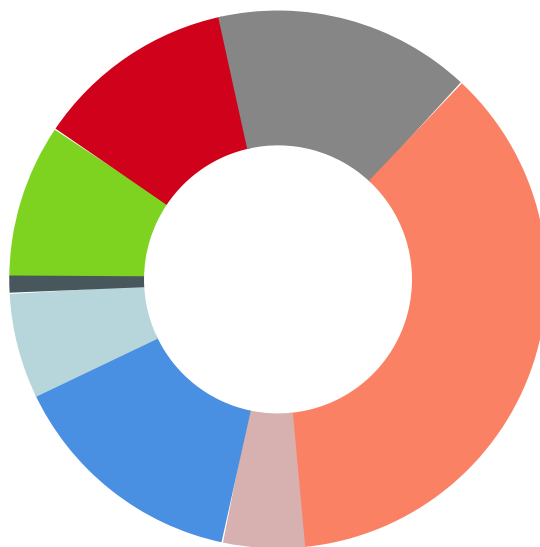
(continued)

## Income of Survey Participants



■ \$25,000-\$50,000 (16.11%) ■ \$50,000-\$75,000 (20%) ■ \$75,000-\$100,000 (26.67%) ■ Over \$100,000 (37.22%)

## Education



■ High school graduate or GED (9.22%) ■ Completed some college (12.14%)  
■ Associate degree (15.53%) ■ Bachelor's degree (36.41%)  
■ Completed some postgraduate (4.85%) ■ Master's degree (14.56%)  
■ Ph.D., law or medical degree (6.31%) ■ Other advanced degree b.. (0.97%)

---

# Survey Responses

(continued)

---

"How satisfied are you with the selection of food in Dickinson County?"

- 180 survey participants responded that they were satisfied (87%)
- 26 survey participants responded that they were dissatisfied (13%)



Below are the top four comments by people who stated that they were dissatisfied with the selection of food in Dickinson County



The food is too expensive.

We need more healthy options.

Dickinson County needs more vegan options.

I wish there was more fresh food in grocery stores.

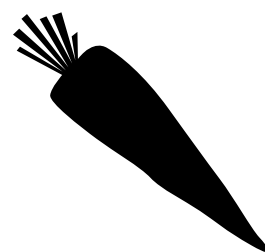
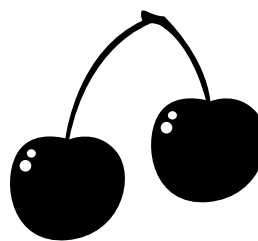
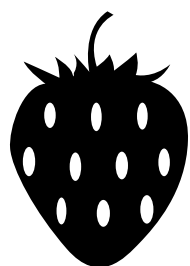


# Survey Responses

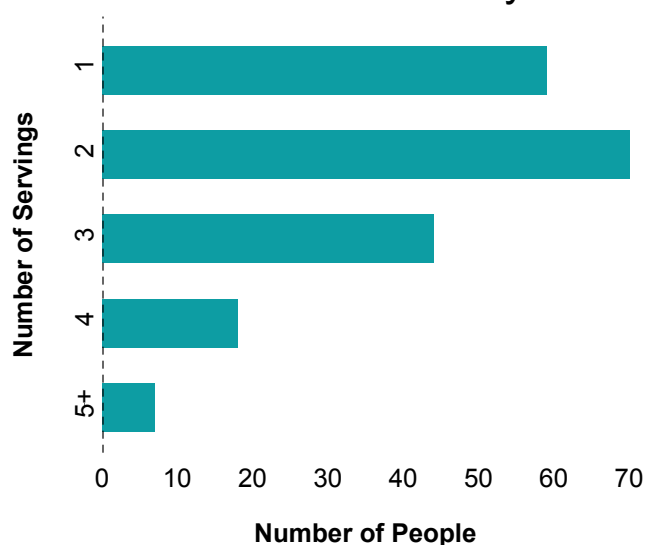
(continued)

"How many servings of fruits and vegetables are you eating a day?"

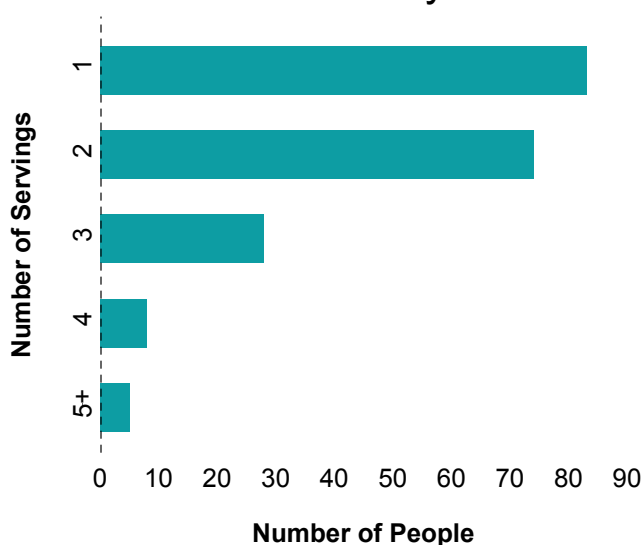
- A majority of survey respondents reported that they ate 2 serving of vegetables a day (34%)
- A majority of survey respondents reported that they ate 1 serving of fruit a day (40%)



How Many Servings of Vegetables Do You Eat A Day?



How Many Servings of Fruit Do You Eat A Day?



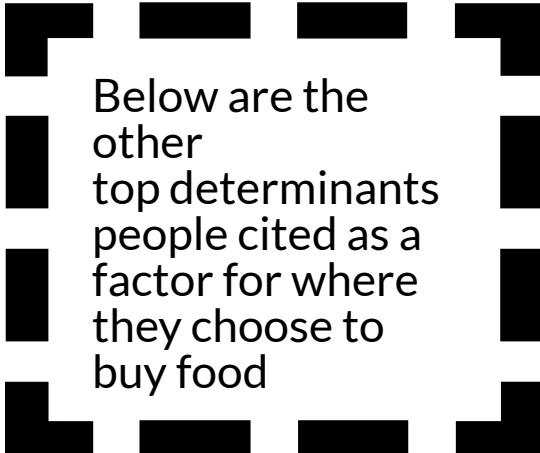
# Survey Responses

(continued)

---

"What factor most determines where you purchase food?"

- Almost 40% of survey participants reported that location was their determining factor



Below are the other top determinants people cited as a factor for where they choose to buy food



Availability.

Price.

Quality of food.



# Survey Responses

(continued)

---

"How satisfied are you with the price of food in Dickinson County?"

- 152 survey participants responded that they were satisfied (74%)
- 52 survey participants responded that they were dissatisfied (26%)



Below are the top four comments by survey participants who were dissatisfied with the price of food in Dickinson County



Fresh produce needs to be more affordable.

Food is too expensive for the middle class.

Restaurants are too expensive.

Our area needs a discount supermarket chain.





# Survey Responses

(continued)

---

"How satisfied are you with food in Dickinson County schools?"

- 15% reported that they were dissatisfied

Below are the top four comments by survey participants who were dissatisfied with the quality of healthy food in Dickinson County schools



The food lacks necessary nutrients.

The portion sizes are not big enough.

The food is too processed.

I wish we could implement a farm to school program.



---

# Focus Group Highlights

---

Group comments about  
the satisfaction levels with  
selection and price of food  
in Dickinson County

.....

- Selection of food is good, especially considering we are a rural area.
  - Healthier foods by nature are more expensive, and also discussed wanting to find ways to make fresh produce more affordable.
  - The group pointed out that there are many restaurants to choose from in the area.
  - Need to create incentives for people to purchase healthier food options at food establishments.
  - Brought up creating prescriptions that physicians could give out as well as fruit and vegetable vouchers for patients to use at local grocery stores.
  - More education about healthy food choices and "food being your pharmacy."
-

---

# Focus Group Highlights

(continued)

---

Group comments about  
the number of fruit and  
vegetable servings  
Dickinson County residents  
are eating

.....

- More education in schools about the importance of eating healthy.
  - Offering healthy cooking classes in the community.
  - More publicity for community gardens and farmer's markets.
  - Farmers' markets can be intimidating for people who haven't been to them before.
  - Want programs for sharing/donating extra produce that farmers and gardeners aren't using.
  - Need to distribute more produce to food pantries.
  - Tailoring healthy eating classes to different medical conditions (i.e. A1C or cholesterol).
  - Putting recipes or directions on how to prepare food by the items in the grocery stores.
-

---

# Focus Group Highlights

(continued)

---

"Dickinson County just won the lottery and will now have millions of dollars to help implement some ways to improve the current system. What should we do to improve the food environment?"

.....

- Use vouchers to subsidize produce in stores
  - Provide more transportation to stores
  - Advertise healthy choices on menus at restaurants
  - Encourage community involvement in taking healthy initiatives
  - Filter through agencies that are already in existence an information or knowledge-based program to get them up to speed on what is healthy for their families (i.e. SNAP)
  - Public service announcements via social media to encourage healthy choices
  - YMCA (or place like it) become a place for kids to get fruit and veggies as a sort of after school snack
  - Put more resources in places where there are not stigmas (i.e healthcare is great and has a lot of resources, but a lot of people don't like to come to the hospital)
  - Give away vouchers for fresh fruits and veggies
  - Training on how to grow micro gardens/container gardening
-

---

# Call to Action

---

## What do we do next?

The information gathered in this report will be used to guide the local hospital's health improvement plan, as well as show the local hunger coalition where work needs to be completed.

Through review of the primary and secondary data, it is noted that there are many positives about the current food system. Despite the majority suggesting that things are well off, there is still room for improvement and opportunities to work through food insecurity. The "Call to Action" sections highlight potential ideas that could improve the overall quality of the food environment in Dickinson County.

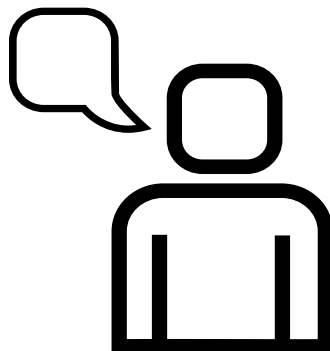
---

## Improvement Area #1

### Food Pantries

.....

- Working with local food pantries to create lists of items that individuals should donate so the pantries get the food they need most. This can be done via working directly with directors of food pantries and communicating their needs to grocery stores who can donate their excess food, as well as advertising it to other agencies who donate food.





---

# Call to Action

(continued)

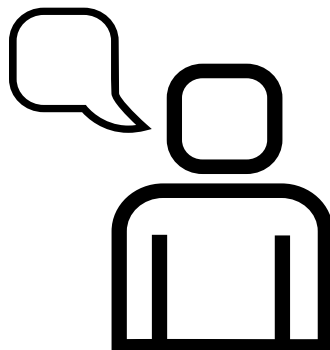
---

## Improvement Area #2

### Food Benefit Programs

.....

- Providing more education for participants in the SNAP program about how to budget for their groceries with the supplemental money.
- Implementing a fruit and vegetable incentive program that matches SNAP benefits for program participants to encourage them to purchase healthy foods. Programs such as Wholesome Wave (WW) are helpful in implementing these incentive programs.
- Increasing the amount of healthy food that goes into the backpacks so kids can have nutritious food to eat over the weekend.



# Call to Action

(continued)

## Improvement Area #3 Community

.....

- Creating and/or advertising healthy cooking classes at affordable rates in the community. These classes could take place in schools or local grocery stores.
- More education (in schools and the community) about proper portion sizes.
- Working with committees such as Healthy Hometowns and the Hunger Coalition to advertise healthy options to people around the community.
- Putting up signs in grocery stores to let patrons know which produce is in season, as it is typically cheaper then.

