

# Food Security

Our vision **for a healthy Trenton** includes all residents of Mercer County having access to nutritious, affordable food.



Trenton families face an urgent challenge accessing healthy food. Many live in food deserts, where grocery stores are scarce and healthy options are expensive or out of reach. Corner stores and fast-food outlets dominate, making nutritious diets difficult to achieve. High poverty, unemployment, and lack of transportation deepen these barriers, leaving many households food insecure.

Lack of access to nutritious food drives health disparities, contributing to higher rates of obesity, diabetes, and other chronic diseases.

For children, food insecurity undermines academic performance and long-term development.



**1 in 3** Trenton residents experience **food insecurity**, 3x higher than the rest of the state.

**Food insecurity** directly contributes to **higher rates of diabetes and obesity** in Trenton— conditions that occur at around

**1.5-2x** the rate of NJ.

Nearly **30%** of Trenton households with children report **difficulty accessing enough healthy food**, over twice the NJ average.

**>70%** of Trenton students **qualify for free or reduced-price school meals**, highlighting deep reliance on school-based food programs.

## Mercer County Food Stakeholders (MCFS)

Host a collaborative of more than 50 partners ranging from food pantries and local farmers to social service providers. Established in 2019, MCFS has evolved into the backbone network for advancing food access, equity, and system-wide solutions.

## Community Voice

Conducted various resident food needs surveys in Trenton and Mercer County through the years to identify barriers, cultural food preferences, and equity gaps revealing affordability, transportation, and language barriers as major obstacles to accessing culturally appropriate foods.

## Technology and Tools

Launched the Mercer County Free Food Finder, an interactive public directory of food resources, and developed a Food Security Index (FSI) at the neighborhood (block group) level to guide equitable resource allocation.

## Statewide Leadership

With funding from New Jersey's pioneering Office of the Food Security Advocate, THT expanded the Food Insecurity Index statewide in 2025, helping all 21 NJ counties better understand and address food insecurity.

## SHORT-TERM GOALS

- Improve transportation supports to help families reach food distribution points more easily.
- Strengthen community awareness of tools like the Mercer County Free Food Finder and connect to resources.

## LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

- Reduce the percent of residents that are food insecure.
- Decrease the percent of residents living in low-income neighborhoods with low access to grocery stores and fresh foods.