



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
6.5.2018

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**City of Chicago and the Greater Chicago Food Depository launch
roadmap to reduce food insecurity and expand healthy food access**

Longtime partners unveil public-private strategy to connect more Chicagoans with nutritious food

CHICAGO – Officials from the City of Chicago and the Greater Chicago Food Depository today announced the launch of *Forward Together: A Roadmap to Reduce Food Insecurity across the City of Chicago*, which builds upon existing resources to increase access of nutritious food for households in need while exploring new solutions to reduce hunger and underlying poverty.

The plan was unveiled Tuesday at the Chicago Public Library Douglass Branch in North Lawndale – the site of the Food Depository’s newest program collaboration with the City of Chicago. Using its proven Healthy Student Market program model, the Food Depository supplies semi-monthly distributions of fresh produce and nutritious groceries for families with children enrolled in city-supported Chicago Early Learning and Head Start funded programming in North Lawndale.

“Meeting the basic needs of Chicago’s youngest children is vital to ensuring that they are ready to learn and be successful in school,” said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. “We applaud this partnership and innovative approach to addressing food insecurity in neighborhoods across the City.”

Access to healthy food during the early stages of a child’s health and development is critical for their long term potential. The Healthy Student Market at the Douglass Branch library is a ground breaking approach that will help mitigate childhood poverty and food insecurity. Essential to this effort is the involvement of community-based childcare providers, parents and librarians who are volunteering to support the program.

Forward Together represents the work of a task force convened by the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS), the Mayor’s Office and the Food Depository. Together, this group reviewed

the work of each City agency involved in fighting hunger and identified opportunities to increase support and coordination that will connect more Chicagoans in need with nutritious food.

“We are striving to ensure that every resident of the City of Chicago has equitable access to the resources and opportunities needed to maximize their health and well-being,” Lisa Morrison Butler, Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services said. “In partnership with the Greater Chicago Food Depository and other community based organizations, we are working to provide nourishment for every Chicagoan at risk of hunger.”

The plan will be implemented by a steering committee of nine City agencies – including DFSS, Chicago Public Schools, Chicago Public Libraries, Chicago Department of Public Health, Chicago Park District, City Colleges of Chicago, Chicago Housing Authority, Chicago Police Department and the Mayor’s Office on People with Disabilities as well as staff of the Food Depository and other community based organizations. The plan focuses on leveraging existing resources and building upon proven service models to provide nutritious food for Chicagoans where they live and receive other services.

While the initial steps focus on providing food and nutrition support for families enrolled in youth programming, the steering committee will explore additional actions to remove barriers between food insecure residents and nutritious food. Priority populations for these actions include youth, older adults, people with disabilities, and unemployed and low-income working families.

By 2020, the steering committee and participating City agencies hope to:

- Raise awareness for food access programming through a unified cross-City Department communications plan.
- Launch 20 new food access sites in high-need communities – a 38% increase in City of Chicago food access locations.
- Ensure consistent SNAP enrollment support at City of Chicago food access locations.
- Pilot and scale four new innovations that will transform how residents connect to food and nutrition resources: employ Summer Meal Youth Ambassadors; prepare and deliver meals to people with disabilities and chronic health conditions; connect early learners and their families to food access programs and WIC nutrition services; and build a bridge between youth and older adults through intergenerational programs.
- Optimize collaboration between community organizations, City agencies as well as public and private funders who are unified behind this effort.

“Too often families across Chicago make tradeoffs between paying for nutritious food, a utility bill, medicine or rent,” said Kate Maehr, Food Depository executive director and CEO. “This ambitious plan builds upon four decades of partnership between the City of Chicago and the Greater Chicago Food Depository, but more importantly it leverages the power of community and it aims toward a future when every Chicagoan, in every neighborhood, has the food they need to thrive.”

Recent collaborations between the food bank and the City include Healthy Student Markets in Chicago Public Schools and City Colleges, benefits outreach at Chicago Public Schools, summer meals for children at Chicago Public Libraries, and a landmark study on hunger among people with disabilities.

More information can be found in the full report *Forward Together: A Roadmap to Reduce Food Insecurity across the City of Chicago*, available on the Food Depository's website at chicagosfoodbank.org/roadmap.

About the Greater Chicago Food Depository

The Greater Chicago Food Depository, Chicago's food bank, is a nonprofit food distribution and training center providing food for hungry people while striving to end hunger in our community. The Food Depository, founded in 1979, makes a daily impact across Cook County with a network of 700 pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, mobile programs, children's programs, older adult programs and innovative responses that address the root causes of hunger. Last year, the Food Depository distributed more than 71 million pounds of shelf-stable food, fresh produce, dairy products and meat, the equivalent of 164,000 meals every day. For more information, visit chicagosfoodbank.org or call 773-247-FOOD.

About Healthy Chicago 2.0

[Healthy Chicago 2.0](#) is the city's four-year community health improvement plan. The plan focuses on ensuring Chicago is a city with strong communities and collaborative stakeholders, where all residents enjoy equitable access to resources, opportunities and environments that maximize their health and well-being. Healthy Chicago 2.0 serves as the start for a new movement dedicated to improving health equity and making Chicago a connected, vibrant and healthy city for all residents. This initiative addresses the Healthy Chicago 2.0 initiative to improve health outcomes by preventing and controlling chronic disease.

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