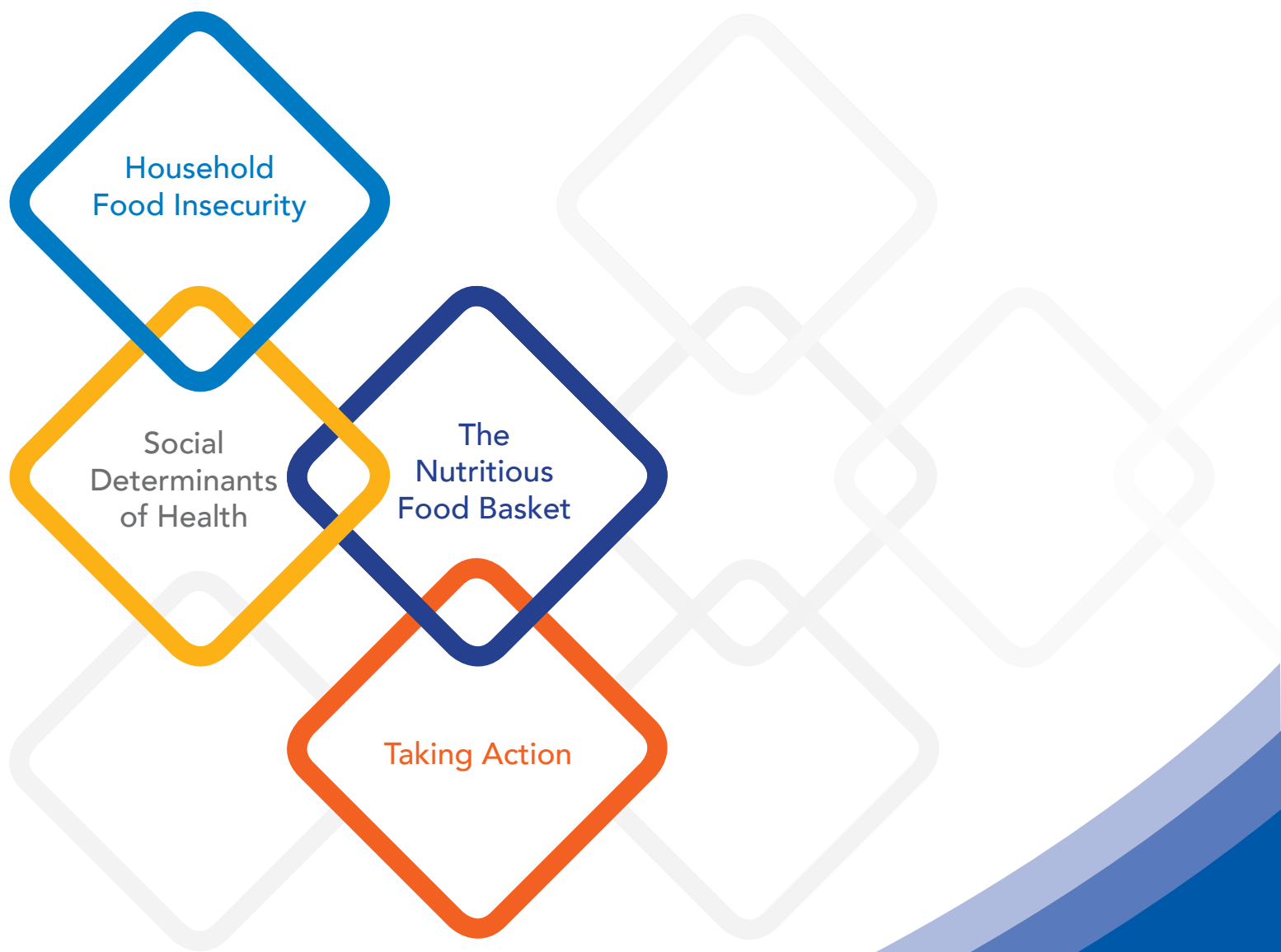


2016

Addressing Food Insecurity

IN ST. THOMAS AND ELGIN COUNTY



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Household Food Insecurity

Prevalence:

- ◆ In 2011-2014, 9.5% of households in Elgin St. Thomas, experienced food insecurity*.
- ◆ As incomes increase, the prevalence of food insecurity decreases

Those at Greatest Risk:

- ◆ Households with children under 18; especially female lone parents
- ◆ Unattached, single people
- ◆ Low-income households

“Food security exists in a household when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.” *World Food Summit, 1996*

In St. Thomas and Elgin County, household food insecurity exists as an economic problem. Without sufficient incomes, households may find themselves struggling to obtain a healthy and adequate diet.

Health Outcomes:

Adults and children who are food insecure have poorer physical and mental health:

- ◆ Food insecure children are more likely to experience chronic health conditions, depression, and suicide ideation and attempts
- ◆ Food insecure adults are more likely to experience diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease

*Represents households experiencing moderate and severe food insecurity at the provincial level. This value may be an under-representation as it does not include marginally food insecure households. Source: Canadian Community Health Survey, 2011-2014.



Social Determinants of Health

Social determinants of health are important factors that impact the health of individuals and populations. Factors such as income, housing, and education compound the burden of food insecurity.

Income:

- ◆ Median household income is \$54 411 (2011)

47-52% of residents live below the Living Wage for Elgin St. Thomas*

- ◆ 16% live below the After Tax Low-Income Measure (2010)
 - ◆ 20% of children
 - ◆ 10% of seniors

Housing:

- ◆ When households spend more than 30% of their income on housing, it may be challenging for them to afford other basic needs such as food.
- ◆ A significant portion of households in St. Thomas and Elgin County pay more than 30% of their income on housing costs (2011)
 - ◆ 19% of homeowners

- ◆ 42% of renters

- ◆ 14% of renters live in subsidized housing (2011)

Education:

- ◆ On average, the highest level of education for those in the workforce (25-64 year olds) is lower in St. Thomas and Elgin County compared to Ontario (2011)
 - ◆ 17% have less than a high school diploma (11% Ontario)
 - ◆ 31% only have a high school diploma (29% Ontario)
 - ◆ 39.6% have a college or university degree (52.5% Ontario)

*The 2014 Living Wage calculation for Elgin St. Thomas was a household before-tax income of \$64 231.



The Nutritious Food Basket survey provides an estimate of the cost of healthy eating. The cost is determined by pricing 67 food items from grocery stores in the area and calculating the average lowest retail price. The Nutritious Food Basket measures the cost of a healthy diet that meets recommendations from Canada's Food Guide.

For 2016, the cost of eating a healthy diet for a family of four in St. Thomas and Elgin County is \$865/month.**

The following scenarios mirror what residents in St. Thomas and Elgin County have to face. When incomes don't leave enough money for all

basic needs, individuals have to rely on coping strategies. These include eating less to stretch the food budget, eating unhealthy foods that are

cheaper, buying food on credit, borrowing food, and relying on food banks and emergency food services.

Nutritious Food Basket 2016 Scenarios:

	Households with Children				Single Person Households		
	Family of 4, Ontario Works	Family of 4, Full-time Minimum Wage	Family of 4, Average Canadian Income	Single Parent with 2 Children, Ontario Works	One Person, Ontario Works	One Person, Ontario Disability Support Program	One Person, Old Age Security / Guaranteed Income Supplement
	Income						
Total Monthly Income (After Tax)	\$2 227	\$2 940	\$7 448	\$2 016	\$768	\$1 206	\$1 563
	Expenses						
Average Monthly Rent	3 Bedroom \$1 004	3 Bedroom \$1 004	3 Bedroom \$1 004	2 Bedroom \$794	Bachelor \$489	1 Bedroom \$656	1 Bedroom \$656
Monthly Food Cost	\$865	\$865	\$865	\$654	\$291	\$291	\$212
	Monthly Income Remaining for Other Expenses						
	\$358	\$1 071	\$5 579	\$568	-\$12	\$259	\$695
% of Income for Rent	45%	34%	13%	39%	64%	54%	42%
% of Income for Food	39%	29%	12%	32%	38%	24%	14%

**Reference family of four, includes a 31-50 year-old male, a 31-50 year-old female, a 14-18 year-old make, and a 4-8 year-old female. Other types of households may have different costs.



Taking Action

Public health interventions can have a significant impact on public health. These interventions often occur at 3 levels: downstream, midstream, and upstream.

Downstream:

Downstream approaches focus on removing barriers to programs and services that promote healthy eating and access to food. These approaches focus on reducing the acute effects of hunger, rather than addressing the underlying causes of food insecurity. Downstream approaches include:

- ◆ Food banks and emergency food services
- ◆ Community meals
- ◆ Low cost meals
- ◆ Student nutrition programs
- ◆ The Good Food Box

Midstream:

Midstream-level approaches may improve access to nutritious food, which can ease the strain on food insecure individuals and households. These approaches also aim to develop food skills and knowledge at an individual and community level. Midstream approaches include:

- ◆ Cooking programs
- ◆ Community gardens
- ◆ Community fruit tree gleaning programs

Upstream:

Upstream-level approaches to poverty and food insecurity address the systems that create and maintain these problems. Current evidence suggests the need for solutions that address the root cause of food insecurity, which is poverty. Upstream approaches include:

- ◆ Food Charters and Food Systems Plans
- ◆ Advocating for increased social assistance rates
- ◆ Advocating for increased funding for safe and affordable housing
- ◆ Supporting the Ontario government in prioritizing the development and implementation of the Basic Income Guarantee pilot

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