

MONTGOMERY COUNTY 2022 Policy Agenda



For more than 42 years, the Capital Area Food Bank has served as the backbone of the region’s hunger relief infrastructure. Throughout this time, we have responded to several crises—none more significant than COVID-19. In FY21, the Food Bank distributed 10,364,057 million meals to food insecure clients in Montgomery County. Based on prior experience and direct engagement with our clients and partners, the Food Bank expects to see elevated levels of need for years to come. The policy recommendations below represent practical and impactful interventions that can be enacted in 2022 to build upon our distribution efforts and reduce food insecurity among our 113,580 clients in the county.



Make Permanent the Working Families Income Supplement Expansion to Individual Tax Identification Number Filers

Montgomery County took a historic step by following the lead of the state legislature’s Earned Income Tax Credit expansion to extend the Working Families Income Supplement (WFIS) eligibility to filers with Individual Tax Identification Numbers (ITINs). This expansion is estimated to affect more than 16,000 residents in Montgomery County who do not normally receive the supplement, with an average annual return of \$907 per filer. However, this temporary expansion is set to sunset on January 1, 2023.

We request that the County permanently expand the WFIS to ITIN filers.



Create a Full-Time Position or Workload to Synergize and Leverage Federal Resources and Programs

Montgomery County has the lowest SNAP utilization rate of any county in Maryland, with just [60% of eligible individuals participating](#) in the program. This leaves an estimated \$57 million going unused annually. Similarly, it is estimated that “[between \\$13.5 million and \\$34.5 million in federal and Maryland EITC remains unclaimed](#)” in the county due to underutilization. [After conversations with advocates, policymakers, governmental administrators, and clients](#), we believe the county could and should activate millions of dollars in federal social welfare by hiring a full-time staffer to increase synergy between federal, state, and local governments and ongoing community-based utilization efforts; to implement and negotiate data-sharing agreements; and to incorporate research-oriented practices into existing and newly created outreach practices.

We request that the county invest in a strategic and coordinated effort to strengthen inter-programmatic utilization efforts and increase participation in social safety net programs.

Based on a survey of 273 clients in Montgomery County, 20 percent indicated that they were receiving no governmental social safety net benefits, whatsoever.



Formulate a Centralized, Strategic Plan for Future of Service Consolidation Hubs

The Montgomery County Service Consolidation Hubs are a critical resource, distributing an average of 152,000 pounds of food per week to members of the community since the start of the pandemic. As the county continues to respond to this crisis, policymakers, governmental administrators, and other actors have articulated a vision for the Service Consolidation Hubs to become permanent “one-stop shops” where residents can receive emergency provisions and access other services, such as assistance with enrollment in social safety net programs. However, in the process of creating our [Montgomery County Utilization Report: A Summary of Findings](#), we found that most Hubs feel that the county should more clearly communicate both its expectation for Hub evolution and its intended investment in empowering a full-service model.

We request that the county, in collaboration with the Hub leaders, formally create a centralized, strategic plan for the future of the Service Consolidation Hubs.



Implement ‘Health in All Policies’ Approach to Governance

“Health in All Policies”(HiAP), as defined by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), is “a collaborative approach that integrates and articulates health considerations into policymaking across sectors to improve the health of all communities and people.” As social determinants of health, food security and nutrition are central to the HiAP strategy. The [Public Health Institute’s Guide for State and Local Governments](#) provides an excellent platform to begin the process of adopting an HiAP approach. We also recommend considering a similar position to that of [Fairfax County’s Health in All Policies Manager](#) for greater coordination of data, collaborative practices, and strategic integration.

We request that the county implement an HiAP approach by incorporating health and wellness considerations into daily governance, administration, and programmatic work.

In the last ten years, the Capital Area Food Bank has distributed
49,969,987 meals to food insecure clients
in Montgomery County.



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